

Christine and the MONGEES



“Mongoose” 425, one of RI’s five BL2’s, leads four F7’s west toward Council Bluffs, Iowa, early on Ground Hog Day 1962. Lou Schmitz

The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad is perhaps one of the least remarked large carriers in the United States. Only lately has it become a topic of conversation because of the amorous designs of both Union Pacific and Chicago & North Western. Rock Island Lines operates a total route-mileage of just under 8,000, spread out over 14 states in the center of America — and possibly suffers from inattention because of this location. The “Rock,” in the colloquial, is also rather commonplace in its daily operating habits as it expedites piggyback shipments, hauls boxcars over endless miles of prairie branch lines, runs a moderate fleet of long-haul passenger trains, and carries commuters in and out of Chicago, quietly performing all the duties expected of a Midwestern trunk line.

Train-watchers are unlikely to spot anything particularly unusual about the motive power on a passing RI train except for the prosaic mismatch of unit types in any given consist. A glance at the Rock Island diesel locomotive roster [page 65] reveals many

common models — over 100 Geeps, a smattering of F’s, a small fleet of E’s for the *Rockets*, and so on. But further investigation reveals RI as possessor of one of the most interesting fleets of diesels in the land.

Repowerings, secondhand purchases, unique models, “firsts” and “lasts” in the diesel world — all are a part of the Rock’s roster. Even the giant Pennsy cannot match Rock Island in ownership of unique diesel-electric models — RI has six. Eight builders are represented by Rock diesel locomotives, a number few other railroads can claim.

Rock Island’s first experiences in the “non-steam” motive-power category came, naturally enough, with motor cars. RI acquired a 37-foot International railbus in 1925, then delved into gas-electrics in 1927 with the purchase from St. Louis Car of the first units of a 13-car fleet of 275 h.p. motor cars powered by Electro-Motive engines. In that same year emerged the first of the baggage-car motors, unique little critters that often were mistaken for shortened con-

versions of “regular” doodlebugs [page 71].

Five Mack-Cummings cars in the 240–270 h.p. range were built during 1928–29, two more EMC-St. Louis cars (of 400 h.p. each) in 1929, and a Standard Steel-Sterling-Westinghouse unit of similar power in 1930 to complete RI’s motor-car fleet of 21 units.

Like its granger brothers, Rock Island easily found use for the doodlebugs on lightly trafficked branch lines. The noisy, often undependable beasts prowled the weed lines, hopping between elevator towns solo, with a few freight cars, or possibly an extra coach now and then, plying the Rock’s more obscure trackage from South Dakota to Louisiana. By the early 1960s only a handful were left, and now all have been removed from the active roster, although some survive in maintenance service as self-powered weed-control cars. Rock later bought Budd’s Rail Diesel Car, successor to the old motor car, which in typical RI fashion got unique treatment [page 67].

Following the motor cars and baggage-car





No other road its size (and few larger) can match Rock Island's diesel diversity

BY J. DAVID INGLES • PHOTOS FROM THE AUTHOR'S COLLECTION



motors, a box-cab unit joined the roster in 1930. Numbered 10000, it was a two-power locomotive built for use around Chicago's La Salle Street Station, where it spent its entire life. Outshopped by GE, the 10000 contained an Ingersoll-Rand 300 h.p. inline six-cylinder engine and was identical to the three-power locomotives built for New York City service except for not having the third-rail pickup apparatus, unnecessary in the Windy City. Keeping 10000 company in Chicago during the '30s and '40s were six siblings: New York Central 1561-1562 and Michigan Central 7530-7533, all two-power locomotives of identical design. The 10000 came off RI's roster about 1950 and was scrapped.

UNIQUE CAB UNITS

Dieselization began in earnest on the Rock in 1937 when the first standard switchers and some not-so-standard passenger cabs arrived from Electro-Motive. The yard goats were 600 h.p. off-the-shelf Winton-engined units; 11 came in 1937 and 18 more the following year. One of the first batch, No. 510, was assigned to and carried initials for RI



"Christine's" roofline shows the results of 621's 1953 "operation" 10 years after the fact. "Mongeeze" BL2's 425/429 are in Peoria, Ill., April 2, 1960. 621, Ken Crist; BL2's, Monty Powell

SOME SAMPLE REPOWERINGS



Clockwise from top left: Rock's only FM's, Nos. 400–401, were repowered at age 10 in 1958 by EMD. No. 401 is at Chicago's 47th Street "Rocket House" diesel shop on June 15, 1955, and is in a suburban-train race with an RS3 out of La Salle Street August 1, 1963. Rock repowered five of its eight EMC NW1's with Alco 244's during 1956–62. No. 701, at Silvis in fall 1958, shows the unique result. No. 703, at Peoria, Ill., in fall '58, was not done. Clockwise from 401: Monty Powell, Tom Smart, Max Zimmerlein, Monty Powell

subsidiary Peoria Terminal, where it served until its remanufacturing in 1959.

The power units for the new Budd-built *Rockets* delivered in 1937 were EMC custom jobs known as model TA and numbered 601–606. These B-B's, which packed 1,200 h.p. through a V-16 Winton engine, lasted until 1958, though they had long been bumped from the *Rockets*.

Electro-Motive added a second unique model to Rock's fleet with the delivery of the two AB's in 1940. Built for the Limon–Colorado Springs (Colo.) section of the *Rocky Mountain Rocket* (though one would go to Denver occasionally), these units resembled a standard E-type booster but had a baggage compartment in the rear end and were equipped with an operating cab in the blunted front end ahead of the single engine. Each unit had an A1A-3 wheel arrangement.

Common practice was to run the AB's (numbered 750–751) through from Colorado to Chicago in multiple with other passenger units. This led in 1948 to the addition of a second engine in the rear — giving the AB's

the full 2,000 h.p. rating of a regular E6 or E7 — and an accompanying standard A1A rear truck. The AB's were taken off the Colorado assignment around 1960, after other E's had front-end m.u. receptacles added. They then ran in the regular passenger-power pool and were seen on the *Golden State*. In early 1965 they were rebuilt at the Rock's main shop in Silvis, Ill., and outfitted for the Chicago push-pull commuter cars. (Conversion includes installation of a small auxiliary diesel for train accessory power in place of the steam generator.) They can be found today on the bi-level trains between Joliet, Blue Island [page 70], and Chicago — the only two of their breed ever built.

44-TON PIONEER

In February 1939 the Rock Island recorded a first in dieseldom by putting to work a 44-tonner specifically designed to qualify for one-man operation. Davenport-Besler unit 351, the star, entered service on a two-trick industrial switching job at Muscatine, Iowa. This 88,000-pound design was developed

after the advent of the National Diesel Agreement of 1937, which required a fireman on all locomotives over 90,000 pounds (45 tons). The little center-cab goats later became common on short lines and were found on some Class 1 rosters. General Electric made the type famous, but RI forces teamed with Iowa neighbor Davenport to pioneer the concept.

The 351 had two 132 h.p. Caterpillar D-13000 inline six-cylinder engines, but unlike the later GE examples, 351 transmitted power through single-reduction motors instead of double-reduction. Davenport's 361–366 soon followed the 351, though equipped with Caterpillar D-17000 series 180 h.p. V-8s, and Rock Island eventually added 11 other 44-tonners to its roster, including 5 from Whitcomb, a Baldwin subsidiary whose plant was in Rochelle, Ill. Six baby Davenport's also were listed on RI's roster—little end-cab jobs of 180 h.p. each that rode on three powered axles. They were purchased in 1940–41 and strongly resembled later Plymouth-built industrial switchers often seen in gravel pits and at mine tipples.

CHRISTINE AND KIN

Although the Rock Island eventually had products from eight builders, EMD furnished the most, with Alco second. The Schenectady firm's first RI representation was No. 730 [page 68], a high-hood switcher rated at 900 h.p. Alco built about 185 high-hoods for more than 40 roads, but 730 was the only one the Rock ever owned. The hood configuration and builder serial number of 730, which was delivered in 1939, suggest that the unit was built in 1937 and sold later.

Much more glamorous machines than 730, and more notable from a historical viewpoint, were Rock Island's Alco passenger cabs, commonly known as the "Kuhler" units for the designer (Otto Kuhler) of their streamlined carbodies. Although New Haven got most of them (60 of 74 built), the first unit of this illustrious design went to, who else, the Rock. No. 624, a DL103b delivered in 1940, was the first of four on the *Rockets*.

Enter the future "Christine" in 1941. Brother of 624, DL109 No. 621 was the last (following DL107's 622 and 623) of the design to come to the Rock. No. 621 was repowered in 1953 by Electro-Motive and sometime later acquired in both railroader and railfan circles the monicker of Christine. [A New Yorker born in 1926 as George William Jorgensen Jr. had become the first widely known American to undergo sex-change surgery, in Denmark beginning in 1951. His transformation to Christine Jorgensen made her an instant celebrity. She died in 1989.] Real fame came the RI locomotive's way in 1962 when No. 622, last remaining RI brother and last Alco-powered Kuhler cab in operation in the U.S., was scrapped. This made 621 one of a kind, since the slant-nosed Alcos of the other five owners had been retired.

To watchers of Rock's diesels, Christine has become something of a *cause célèbre*. Although the true Alco sound is missing, the sight is there. She normally is assigned to Chicago-Des Moines No. 5 [page 66], the *Des Moines Rocket*, and the eastbound *Corn Belt Rocket*, No. 10, customarily in m.u. with E's and/or FP7's in the power pool. Christine is considered "just another E unit" by RI mechanics; she presents no special problems and should have a few active years left.

Christine's family was not the only notable group of Rock Island Alcos to be delivered in 1941. Four 1,000 h.p. B-B model RS1 road-switchers, Nos. 746-749, arrived and claimed the title of first true road-switchers delivered to an American common carrier. They were designed at the request of the Rock, but this original quartet was destined to serve on-line for only a few months. In early 1942 the Army drafted them for use overseas, and Alco equipped them with C-C trucks before they shipped out, numbered 8004-8007 (not in order). After the war, three went north for service on the Alaska Railroad, as Nos. 1031, 1041, and 1042 (again,



RS1 736 adds cars to train 10 at Des Moines, Iowa, on January 26, 1965. J. David Ingles



EMD prime mover is visible in RS2 453 at Little Rock on the last day of 1962. J. David Ingles



RI's newest of 18 Davenport 44-tonners works at Fairbury, Nebr., in July '59. J. J. Morrison

SECONDHANDERS



Clockwise from top left: RI SW8 839 still wears the colors of absorbed Wichita Falls & Southern while switching at Oklahoma City in December 1960. NW2 797, seen from Roosevelt Road in Chicago on July 24, 1964, is ex-New York, Ontario & Western 113. The Rock had only two Alco S1's, 598–599, both ex-Pullman Railway of Chicago; 599 is at Little Rock, Ark., on September 3, 1953. S2 732, in Kansas City's "west bottoms" on July 16, 1966, is the former Toledo Terminal 102. 599, J. J. Morrison; others, J. David Ingles

not in order). Rock Island received identical units 742–745 as replacements in 1944, and also added seven other new ones, 735–741.

The remaining war years saw Rock's diesel fleet swell mainly in the switcher department. As on many carriers, road freight units did not arrive until 1944. The first group was a dozen cab and booster sets of EMD FT's numbered 88–89 A and B; in 1945, eight more cabs and four boosters in the 70 series followed. The Rock's FT's were delivered in a red-and-black paint scheme that was to become the RI freight standard [page 68], and originally were equipped with the regular small numberboards, but modifications in later years gave many of the FT's deceptive anonymity. They lacked dynamic brakes, and so did not have the boxy roof hatches distinctive to most FT's. When standard F7 numberboards, Mars lights, and solid-maroon paint were added and the famed four-porthole side panels blanked out, the 1,350 h.p. freighters frequently were mistaken for younger F3 or F7 cousins.

Interestingly, despite the fact that Rock

Island's diesel roster was sprinkled with more than 100 conventional F-type cab and booster units, the most universal and first truly versatile production model, EMD's F3, was absent. Following the acquisition of the three dozen FT's, Rock took 12 1,350 h.p. F2's in 1946. Then it switched to Alco for its next freight cabs, not to return to Electro-Motive for road power until 1949 for the first of 45 F7's and 10 dual-service FP7's.

Along with the Alco FA's, the Rock made news on other fronts with its diesel purchases of 1948, its first volume buying year. Also from Alco came five RS2's, 1,500 h.p. B-Bs that were RI's first higher-horsepower, truly multi-purpose road-switchers.

THE MONGEES

From EMD came the "Mongees," five BL2's. The pug-nosed, wide-hipped Geep predecessors, RI Nos. 425–429, were standard catalog items but had steam generators for passenger service. Standard or not, only 59 BL's were built, so RI's quintet was notable for its mere existence. After serving on rural

locals, they became visible to all visitors to the nation's railroad capital as they hauled Chicago commuters (only RI's and B&M's did so) on weekdays and freights to Peoria or Silvis on weekends. Railfans soon gave the odd-looking units a nickname: Mongees.

Also in 1948, Fairbanks-Morse made its one and only sale to the Rock: a pair of 1,500 h.p. B-B road-switchers, Nos. 400–401. The FM's, bought to keep the Mongees company in the Chicago suburban zone, had m.u. controls and steam generators. Electro-Motive re-engined the pair in 1958, and the FM's continue to haul suburban trains despite the inroads of bi-level Budds powered by various stock EMD's.

In 1950, three groups of switch engines that were to become loners in diesel history were sold to the Rock Island by three builders. Lima-Hamilton built a pair of 800 h.p. units singular in carbody style which were among the few 800 h.p. models it sold. The Limas, Nos. 800–801, naturally enough, had an extra rear "step" for the battery box on the cab end, a feature lacking on the only

ROCK ISLAND'S DIESELS, 1930-1965

Road No.	Quantity	Builder	Model	H.P.	Type	Built	Notes (Roster as of mid-1965)
1-2	2	EMD	LWT12	1,200	B-1	1954-56	Off roster
10-23	14	EMD	F7B	1,500	B-B	1949-51	Ex-100B-1009B, 120B-123B; 121B rebuilt to GP18M 123B, 1963
28-35	8	Alco	FB1	1,500	B-B	1948-49	Ex-145B-152B; renumbered 128B-135B when repowered by EMD, 1955-56
38-49	12	EMD	F2A	1,350	B-B	1946	38-41, 45-46 scrapped
70-77, 88-99	20	EMD	FTA	1,350	B-B	1944-45	Scrapped
70B-73B, 88B-99B	16	EMD	FTB	1,350	B-B	1944-45	Scrapped
100-127	28	EMD	F7A	1,500	B-B	1949-51	
128-143	16	Alco	FA1	1,500	B-B	1948-49	Ex-145-160; renumbered when repowered by EMD, 1955-56
200-238	39	GE	U25B	2,500	B-B	1963-65	
300-333	34	EMD	GP35	2,500	B-B	1964-65	
345-350	6	Davenport	30-ton	180	C	1940-41	Scrapped
351	1	Davenport	44-ton	264	B-B	1939	Scrapped
361-366, 372-377	12	Davenport	44-ton	360	B-B	1939-42	363-366 Scrapped
367-371	5	Whitcomb	44-DE-5	360	B-B	1940	369-370 Scrapped
400-401	2	FM	H15-44	1,500	B-B	1948	Steam generators; repowered by EMD, 1958
402-411	10	EMD	FP7	1,500	B-B	1949	
425-429	5	EMD	BL2	1,500	B-B	1948-49	Steam generators; nicknamed "Mongeeese"; scrapped
430-441	12	EMD	GP7	1,500	B-B	1950	
450-454	5	Alco	RS2	1,500	B-B	1948	Repowered by EMD, 1957, with GP7 long hoods
455-475	21	Alco	RS3	1,600	B-B	1950-51	463 wrecked, rebuilt to 475; 456 repowered by EMD, 1958; 455, 457-462, 464-469, 475 scrapped
485-499	15	Alco	RS3	1,600	B-B	1951	Steam generators
500-528	29	EMC	SC	600	B-B	1937-38	Rebuilt to SW900M and SW900, 1957-59, renumbered in 550 and 900 series
529-546	18	EMD	SW1	600	B-B	1942-49	
550-563	14	EMD	SW900M	900	B-B	1957-58	Rebuilt from SC's
598-599	2	Alco	S1	660	B-B	1941	Ex-Pullman Railway (Chicago) 20-21
601-606	6	EMC	TA	1,200	B-B	1937	Only TA's built; scrapped
602-604 (2nd)	3	EMD	E7B	2,000	A1A-A1A	1946-48x	Ex-632B-634B; 632B scrapped
607-612	6	EMD	E7B	2,000	A1A-A1A	1946-48x	Ex-637B-642B
615-617	3	EMD	F7B	1,500	B-B	1949	Ex-675B-677B; steam generators; 675B rebuilt to GP18M 1239, 1963; 676B scrapped
621-624	4	Alco	DL109	2,000	A1A-A1A	1940-41	621 repowered by EMD in 1953, nicknamed "Christine"; 622-624 scrapped; 624-621 built in reverse numerical order; later references label 624 as model DL103b, and 623 and 622 as DL107
625-626	2	EMC	E3A	2,000	A1A-A1A	1939	
627-631	5	EMD	E6A	2,000	A1A-A1A	1941	627 rebuilt to E8A 656
632-642	11	EMD	E7A	2,000	A1A-A1A	1946-48	
643-656	14	EMD	E8A	2,250	A1A-A1A	1950-53	643 ex-EMD demonstrator 942; 656 rebuilt, 1953, from E7A 627, later scrapped
675-677	3	EMD	F7A	1,500	B-B	1949	Steam generators
700-707	8	EMC	NW1	900	B-B	1938	702-704 scrapped; others repowered by RI with Alco engines, 1956-62
716-729	14	Alco	S2	1,000	B-B	1942-48	
730	1	Alco	HH900	900	B-B	1939	Scrapped
731-732	2	Alco	S2	1,000	B-B	1946	Ex-Toledo Terminal 101-102
735-749	15	Alco	RS1	1,000	B-B	1941-44	746-749 to U.S. Army, replaced by 742-745
750-751	2	EMD	AB6	2,000	A1A-A1A	1940	Originally 1,000 h.p., A1A-3 wheel arrangement; only AB6's built
758-759	2	BLH	S12	1,200	B-B	1953	758 off roster, sold
760-764	5	Baldwin	V01000	1,000	B-B	1943	Scrapped
765-774	10	EMD	NW2	1,000	B-B	1948-49	
775-779	5	EMD	SW9	1,200	B-B	1953	
795-797	3	EMD	NW2	1,000	B-B	1948	Ex-New York, Ontario & Western 111-113
798-799	2	Davenport	112-ton	1,000	B-B	1950	798 scrapped
800-801	2	Lima-Ham.	--	800	B-B	1950	Scrapped
802-806	5	BLH	S8	800	B-B	1952	802, 804 scrapped
811-840	30	EMD	SW8	800	B-B	1952-53	839-840 ex-Wichita Falls & Southern 801-802
900-914	15	EMD	SW900	900	B-B	1959	Rebuilt from SC's
920-936	17	EMD	SW1200	1,200	B-B	1965	
1000-1016	17	Whitcomb*	75-DE-12c	650	B-B	1950-51	Ex-CN (*see notes below); 1002, 1016 off roster, sold
1200-1237	38	EMD	GP7	1,500	B-B	1951	
1238-1239	2	EMD	GP18M	1,500	B-B	1963	Rebuilt from F7B's 121B, 675B
1250-1311	62	EMD	GP7	1,500	B-B	1952-53	1301 scrapped
1312-1332	21	EMD	GP9	1,750	B-B	1957-59	
1333-1353	21	EMD	GP18	1,800	B-B	1960-61	
10000	1	GE	2-power	300	B-B	1930	Scrapped

NOTES: Roster as of mid-1965, some details updated. Road numbers and quantities for groups are as-built. In 1965 parlance, "rebuilt," as in from a cab unit to a hood unit, essentially means "traded in on."
 Key to builders: Alco, American Locomotive Co. (Alco-GE, 1949-53); BLH, Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton; Davenport, Davenport-Besler; EMC, Electro-Motive Corp. (through 1940); EMD, Electro-Motive Division, General Motors (1941 onward); FM, Fairbanks-Morse; GE, General Electric; Lima-Ham., Lima-Hamilton.
 *1000-series switchers: Canadian National in 1948 ordered 18 75-ton switchers of Whitcomb design from Canadian Locomotive Co., to be CN 7803-7820; order canceled after only 7803-7809 were delivered, in 1949; all 18 units were returned to Whitcomb and repowered with 500 h.p. Caterpillar engines; nominally 70-tonners, the units were sold in 1950, one to Washington & Old Dominion No. 55, the remainder to Rock Island Nos. 1000-1016.
 SOURCES: TRAINS, December 1965; *Second Diesel-Spotter's Guide* (Kalmbach, 1973).—J.D.I.



Spared from the solid maroon or red paint most Rock Island E's have suffered, Christine, leading FP7 404 and E7A 640 on train 5 out of Chicago on July 24, 1964, still sports the old maroon nose with some stainless-steel side panels. J. David Ingles



Same schedule, two types of trains: LWT12 No. 1 leads the *Jet Rocket* (left), about to leave Peoria, Ill., on the morning of May 13, 1956, while a year later, on August 25, 1957, E8A No. 654 is on train 502, a conventional-car morning *Peoria Rocket*. Two photos, Monty Powell

RDC'S THAT LOST THEIR ENGINES

other 800 h.p. group, 21 units for NYC's Chicago River & Indiana.

Davenport, following its earlier 44-ton innovation, tried again with two 112-ton center-cabs rated at 1,000 h.p. each. These units, Nos. 798-799, were as tall as a boxcar [page 69] and had two 500 h.p. Caterpillar engines. One remains on the roster, assigned to the Quad Cities area (Davenport, Moline, East Moline, and Rock Island) within sight of both Silvis shops and its Iowa birthplace.

IMPORTS AND OTHER GOATS

The third batch of RI's unique 1950-vintage switchers are end-cab 75-ton Whitcomb units. Strikingly similar to GE's 70-ton version, they were built for Canadian National but were deemed unsatisfactory and were returned to the U.S. Rock Island picked up 17 of the 18 [page 69]; the other was bought by Washington & Old Dominion as its No. 55. Two of RI's have been sold to short lines and another leased to subsidiary Warren & Ouachita Valley, but the others are still active, assigned to various light yard jobs.

Yard engines also dominate RI's second-hand purchases, another quirk of note. The list includes former demonstrators, units picked up through acquiring short lines, and several outright purchases from other roads.

Four goats have been added to the Rock's fleet through shortline absorptions: S1's 598-599, the only 660 h.p. Alcos on RI, from Pullman Railway in Chicago, and SW8's 839-840, conventional EMD's that came with the Wichita Falls & Southern. The Alcos were sent away from their Windy City habitat and assigned to the Arkansas Division, a Schenectady-product domain headquartered in Little Rock. The WF&S SW8's have not strayed far; they're Southern Division units customarily employed in Oklahoma.

Five yard switchers have been picked up secondhand by the Rock simply to ease power shortages. Nos. 795-797, 1,000 h.p. EMD NW2's of 1948, were New York, Ontario & Western Nos. 111-113 until their purchase by RI in 1957. Toledo Terminal was the source for two 1946 Alco S2's; formerly TT 101-102, they became RI 731-732 in 1959. Early 1965 assignment lists show the NYO&W units on the Chicago Division and the TT's on the Missouri-Kansas Division.

One yard engine and one passenger unit owned by RI are former demonstrators, though builder records do not substantiate the claim for the switcher, Baldwin 759. Since the sale of sister 758 to Apache Railway in Arizona in 1958, No. 759 is at least the sole 1,200 h.p. Baldwin unit on the Rock. Electro-Motive passenger unit 643 began life in 1949 as E8A demonstrator No. 952 and was purchased by the Rock Island a year later.

LWT'S AND REPOWERINGS

The most famous of RI's adopted units were not switchers, however, and were unique



The first three of RI's five RDC3's (9002-9004) live on as RPO-coaches 902-904. RDC 9002 (top) is on the *Choctaw Rockette* in fall 1958, while a 900 trails train 21 of Sayre, Okla., in fall 1967 (above). Top, photographer unknown; above, Rodger Darling

Since Rock Island had so much experience with motor cars of various designs [page 71], it followed that it should also sample the Budd Rail Diesel Car. The road bought two of the RDC3 versions in 1953, Nos. 9002-9003. Containing a coach section, baggage compartment, and small RPO apartment, they normally were used on lightly patronized local passenger runs which required only a single car. Subsequently, the baggage compartment was eliminated in favor of a longer 30-foot RPO.

The Rock eventually wound up with five RDC3's, after buying the third one, No. 9004, in 1955 and two more, Nos. 9015-9016, in 1956. They rarely strayed north of Kansas City and usually were assigned to runs in Kansas and on the Choctaw Route from Memphis west through Arkansas and Oklahoma to Amarillo, Texas. On the latter route the runs were named *Choctaw Rockette*.

Several points concerning Rock's RDC operation were notable. During past years it was common to see an RDC leave Kansas City back in the consist of a southbound train (the Budds came north this way also), waiting to be dropped at a division point where it could take off on its own. A similar situation existed on the Choctaw run during Christmas season, when mail swelled the consist. A steam-equipped Geep would be used to pull the extra head-end cars, and the RDC would run at the rear as a coach.

After Rock Island's last RDC run was discontinued in 1964, the cars' engines were removed. However, the cars are still carried on the roster as RPO-coaches, and in fact, three — Nos. 902-904, ex-9002-9004 — see service as the regular passenger-carrying car, and RPO, on the remaining train between Memphis and Tucumcari, N.Mex.

Rock Island's *Choctaw Rockettes* claimed title as the longest RDC runs in the nation for about three years, from the time Western Pacific discontinued its 917-mile Oakland-Salt Lake City *Zephyrette* RDC runs until the RI trains were pulled off. The Memphis-Amarillo distance is 762 miles. NYC's Boston & Albany Beeliner run of 200 miles held the U.S. long-distance RDC title until killed September 26, 1965, although Northern Pacific's international run to Winnipeg is somewhat longer. —J.D.I.



No F3's on the Rock: An F-unit trio — F2 48, F7 122, and FT 70 — rolls 126-car train 42 into Bureau, Ill., July 21, 1962. J. David Ingles



When built, Rock's FT's looked normal, as here at Council Bluffs, Iowa, July 7, 1953, but most would lose their portholes [top photo]. The "RF" is for "Rocket Freight." J. J. Morrison



Rock's only high-hood Alco, ready for trade-in at Kansas City, Kans., on April 16, 1965, is thought to have been built in 1937, two years before the railroad bought it. J. David Ingles

to the Rock after purchase. These were the LWT12 cabs, the GM power units built for the Aerotrains in 1954 and 1955. Under GM ownership they were numbered 1000–1001; they became 3 and 2, respectively, when the Rock acquired the trainsets in 1958. Meantime, RI had ordered an identical unit, No. 1, from GM to power the Talgo *Jet Rocket* between Chicago and Peoria. This unit was delivered in 1956 and was the first of the trio to be retired, to serve as parts supplier for 2 and 3. The former demonstrators remained in suburban service with the lightweight equipment until April 1965, when all were withdrawn in favor of the new bi-levels. The trains and the two remaining units are stored at Silvis, awaiting a buyer.

Along with secondhand units, repowered diesels have given a special flavor to Rock Island's roster. After the famed Christine operation on Alco 621 by EMD in 1953, RI did not participate in any conversions until 1957–58, when the second round of dieselization was about to get underway. Again EMD was selected.

In 1957 the Alco freight cabs and boosters, and the original Alco multi-purpose units, the 1,500 h.p. RS2's, were subjected to EMD repowerings. A single RS3, No. 456, and the two Fairbanks-Morse units were converted in 1958. Since the FA's lacked dynamic brakes and retained the Alco cooling system, the repowering did not give them a telltale bulge on the roof as it did Katy's EMD-ized FA's [Spring 2014 CLASSIC TRAINS]. Like Frisco's, RI's repowered FA units had to be heard to be detected. The RS units kept the Alco cab and short-end hood, as did similar repowered units on Katy and Frisco.

UNITS UNIQUE TO THE ROCK



Clockwise from top left: Lima-Hamiltons 800 (at Chicago May 4, 1962) and 801 had unique carbodies. EMC's 1,200 h.p. TA was a lighter version of the 1,800 h.p. EA, both built in 1937; RI 604 is at Omaha July 1, 1953. Whitcomb 1004 (at Rock Island in August '58) is among a group of Canadian rejects. Davenport-Besler's two 1,000 h.p., Caterpillar-engined center-cabs of 1950 were not repeated; RI 798 (at Silvis in April 1965) was the first to go to scrap. Clockwise: K.C. Henkels, J. J. Morrison, Bernard Corbin, Ken Crist

The Rock Island RS2 repowerings had an interesting sequel involving some Electro-Motive switchers. During 1957–1962, five of the eight EMC 1938-built NW1-model goats were converted by RI at Silvis by installing Alco 244 engines from the repowered RS2's and removing their Winton prime movers. To keep within the limits of the traction motors, the engines were de-rated to 900 h.p. by reworking the fuel injection systems. Because of clearance problems with the Alco prime movers, the hoods of the NW's were raised to a position nearly flush with the cab roofs [photo, page 62], and the Alco-ized switchers putter around resembling maroon piano crates.

This is believed to be the only group of Electro-Motive units repowered with Alco engines, although a few Baldwins have received the same treatment. The converted NW1's — Nos. 700, 701, 705, 706, and 707 — can be found working in Silvis and around the Quad Cities area. The remaining units in the series that were not repowered went to scrap in the early months of 1965.

VARIETY PER ANNUM

Not shown on Rock Island locomotive ownership lists but adding more flavor to its roster each year is the "Units Leased" category. During the 1950s, New York Central Baldwin Sharknose freight units appeared annually on the Des Moines and Western divisions, released from drag duties in Indiana and Ohio to help get the harvest west of the Mississippi to market.

The Sharks were followed regularly by aged Great Northern FT sets, itinerant laborers from the north which in their twilight years also went to Colorado & Southern and Missabe Road to fill in during power shortages. To complete the RI image, Alcos made the Iowa scene in the early 1960s, as Union Pacific FA1's, sometimes en route to or from stints in Canada, were leased to help out until new units arrived from EMD.

A look at the early 1965 list of leased units shows a new trend to yard power rather than road freight power in Rock's borrowing, but with nothing lost in novelty. This trend no doubt is a reflection of the appearance of new

road freight units. With delivery of RI's new switcher order, such borrowing may not go on, but it's worth savoring while it lasts.

Reading from the top of the list numerically, Alco switchers 20 and 21 lead off. These 1,000 h.p. goats are the property of the Galveston, Houston & Henderson, a Texas switching road, and wear black paint with heralds of GH&H owners Katy and MoPac adorning the cabs. RI assigned them to the Southern Division.

Two Kansas City Terminal units are next: another pair of black Alcos numbered 57 and 58. RI used them on the "Mo-Kan" Division and kept them within coupling distance of home rails in Kansas City.

A pair of road engines sneak in, SD9's from DM&IR assigned to the Rock Island Division. The seasonal nature and declining volume of Missabe Road's business have resulted in a scattering of its polished maroon C-C hoods. The SD's are newcomers to RI, but they've been leased in recent years by such varied roads as Norfolk & Western, Pennsy, and Canadian National, and some



have been sold to U.S. Steel cousin B&LE. Almost inexplicably, one Baldwin C-C road-switcher from Soo Line is listed. Soo 384, assigned to the Rock Island Division and used alone because of m.u. incompatibility, is a burbling white monster that originally belonged to Duluth, South Shore & Atlantic. Almost as startling is the presence of Missouri Pacific 1023, assigned to the Rock's Southern Division. No. 1023, known to MoPac fans as the "Blue Piano Crate," is a rebuilt EMD switcher that looks akin to RI's 700's, even though it contains an EMD prime mover. Five Alco switchers from the 1100 class of aspiring RI parent Union Pacific complete the April 1965 roster of visitors.

SUBURBAN PRIZE-WINNERS

Rock Island yards may be dotted with oddities, but Christine is about the only unusual creature to grace the head end of the present *Rocket* fleet. Straight EMD products, from the two E3's to the dozen active E8's, represent the rest of the regular road passenger power pool. A few steam-equipped Geeps fill in occasionally. But to find the familiar RI unorthodoxy, one need only return to Chicago and check the suburban trains.

Perhaps even more than through train service, a commuter operation reflects a railroad's image. Admittedly the Rock Island was a bit tardy in applying the polish, but the bi-levels have arrived, and at least a portion of Blue Island and Beverly Hills dwellers can be content and comfortable riding to work in the fashionable Chicago push-pull style.

RI's commuter power takes the prize for all Chicagoland. The old roster was classic enough, with the 15 RS3's with dual controls and train-lighting equipment forming the bulwark of the fleet (Arkansas is home to the freight-only RS3's). Add in the two FM's, the Aero trains, the Mongeese, and a couple of regular FP7's, and you had the picture — until the Budd bi-levels arrived in early '65.

The new line-up has lost little color. Only a small portion of the operation was taken over by the bi-levels. As a result, only the lightweights and the Mongeese have been replaced to date (the FM's and most of the Alcos are still busy). The new trains are powered by several recent conversions of former road power, and these units are an illustrious group. First to be converted for push-pull operation was No. 630, one of the four remaining long-nosed EMD E6's. Chicagoland fans have added an eagle ornament that now adorns the top of her front headlight, and she still sports the stainless-steel side panels, with maroon paint only on her nose.

Not satisfied with a mere E6, Rock next converted its only three straight F7A's equipped for passenger work, Nos. 675-677, and then added the only two AB6's in the world for good measure. If all this does not put every other Chicago push-pull operation in the shade, nothing will.



On the *Rocky Mountain Rocket* as intended, an AB6 will be second unit from Limon (top, in 1960) to Colorado Springs, and in 1963 (middle) will lead out of the Springs. The AB6's now haul bi-levels (above, July 9, 1965) to Joliet. Middle, Ken Crist; others, J. David Ingles

BAGGAGE-CAR LOCOMOTIVES

MUNDANE FREIGHT POWER

Although Rock Island's early diesel acquisitions are studded with rarities and variations on the conventional, the standardization of the second generation of diesels has somewhat eclipsed its pursuit of the unusual.

After acquisition of the Mongeese, RI had ordered 12 "plain vanilla" GP7's which came in August 1950, placing the Rock among the earliest Geep purchasers. From then on, RI was — with the exception of an order of Alco RS3's in 1951, including the commuter engines — a solid EMD customer for new road power until 1963.

That year ended the first round of RI's dieselization, but 1961 marked the initiation of the second, when 10 FT trade-ins went to EMD on an order for GP18's. (During 1957–60, RI added 32 GP9's and GP18's, but no older units were traded in or scrapped.)

At first RI stuck with normally aspirated road-switchers, following the model change from GP9 to GP18 and not sampling turbo-charged power. The low-nose option was shunned, too. But in 1963 RI joined the horsepower race with 12 General Electric U25B's with the standard low short hood but (as always on RI) minus dynamic brakes. This was its first non-EMD order since 1951.

In 1964 the trade-in arrangements on a second order of the popular "U-boats," as RI men tab the GE's, added a touch of the old Rock atmosphere. No units were traded in on these U25B's, but the remaining FT's were cut up at Silvis. Their trucks were saved and placed under certain of the Alco FA1's whose trucks went to Erie to keep the compatibility of GE traction motors on GE locomotives. Thus some of the EMD-engined Alco cabs were mongrelized even more, keeping only the Alco carbody and some components.

This year of 1965, well into the second round of dieselization, may mark the beginning of the end for the unique flavor of RI's diesel fleet. A recent order for 20 EMD GP35's resulted in the retirement of some of Rock's gems, including original 44-tonner 351, high-hood Alco 730, and the Mongeese. A second GP35 order, for 14, included 5 on trade-ins of a like number of F2 cabs, and a third U-boat order at the same time sent in 14 of the freight RS3's on a 1-for-1 basis.

The saddest order of all in the eyes of Rock diesel fans, though, was one for 17 SW1200's, which will undoubtedly result in the retirement of more of the older, odd yard switchers. Economics make sense, but those who mourned the passage of steam should understand the loss felt by the modernists as one of the most fascinating fleets of diesels in the land begins to disintegrate under the wheels of progress. ■

J. DAVID INGLES, senior editor of CLASSIC TRAINS since its inception (now part-time), served on TRAINS' editorial staff 1971–2007. This was his first story published in TRAINS.



"Baggage-car locomotive" 9006 lopes west near Mercier, Kans., with Horton–Fairbury, Nebr., mixed train 79 on May 12, 1962. Frank Tatnall [see Winter 2011 CLASSIC TRAINS]

In the same year Rock Island ordered its first big doodlebugs, 1927, its shops at Horton, Kans., converted two 1911 40-foot mail cars to stubby baggage-car locomotives of 550 h.p. rating. Two 275 h.p. six-cylinder distillate engines provided the power. One unit, No. 9000, was geared for 60-mph passenger service; the other, 9001, for 30-mph freight service. The power plants exactly paralleled those of the gas-electric cars ordered the same year. Likewise, when 400 h.p. gas-electrics came from EMC–St. Louis in 1929, RI took three more baggage cars and equipped them with twin 400 h.p. Electro-Motive power plants to make 800 h.p. units 9005–9007. Later in 1929 the same machinery was installed in seven more units, Nos. 9008–9014, based on all-new St. Louis carbodies instead of old baggage cars.

The RI motor baggage cars were converted to Hamilton and Caterpillar diesel-powered units during 1940–47. Although intended for dual service, as branchline passenger traffic waned they turned their energies more to local freight hauls.

Car 9008 was the first to leave the roster, about 1948; almost a decade later it was joined in retirement by 9009. By 1960, only 9006, 9013, and 9014 remained, although the body of 9012 was intact as the depot at Ellsworth, Minn. Nos. 9006 and 9014 last operated out of Fairbury, Nebr., in fall 1962 on branch runs to Horton, Kans., and Ruskin, Nebr. Then they went to storage at Des Moines, Iowa, and eventually to Silvis, Ill., by the backshops.

The final act starring the baggage-car motors came late in 1962 when No. 9013 was used on the Bucklin–Dodge City (Kans.) run during the fall harvest rush. By mid-1963 she was in storage at Liberal, Kans., then later in Kansas City. In early 1964 the three remaining units were retired, ending Rock Island's motor-car era. — J.D.I.



Rock's first 12 GP7's, in 1950, wore this simple red and black, as did the BL2's. Beginning in '51, RI Geeps had the fancy "barber pole" version, as on the unit at left. Monty Powell