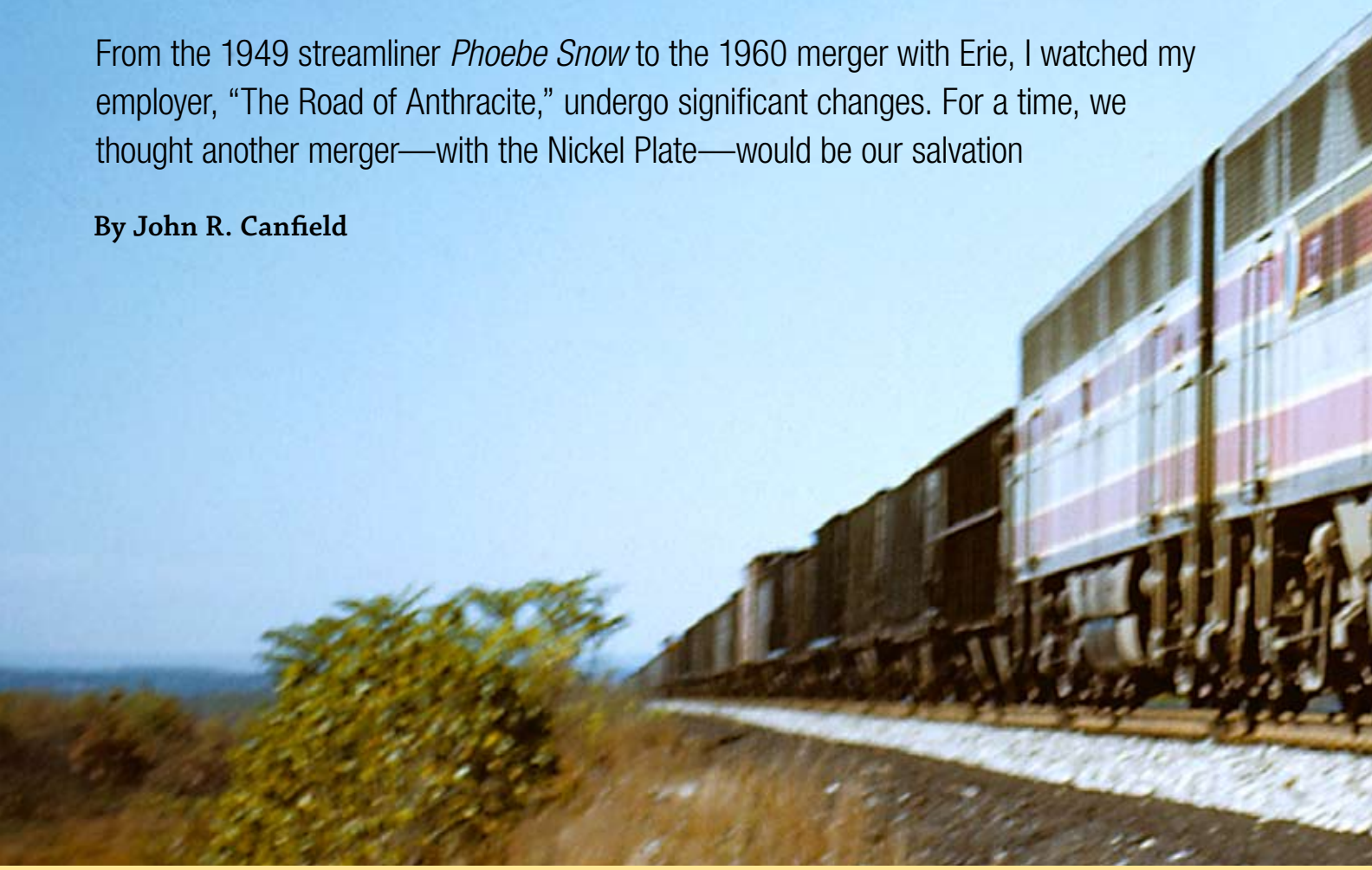
The last 11 years of the Lackawanna

From the 1949 streamliner *Phoebe Snow* to the 1960 merger with Erie, I watched my employer, "The Road of Anthracite," undergo significant changes. For a time, we thought another merger—with the Nickel Plate—would be our salvation

By John R. Canfield



The year 1949 proved to be a paradox for the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western, the 925-mile railroad linking the New York City area with Buffalo and other upstate New York points. This long-time blue-chip property among eastern anthracite carriers in 1948 had posted its highest net income per share since 1930, at $3.70—only to have gross revenues for 1949 drop 12 percent, producing a net of only $1.32 per share.

This disappointment, an early warning of vulnerability, was due in part to a mild recession and prolonged labor stoppages in the coal and steel industries. However, of primary concern to DL&W President William White was "the diversion of traffic to subsidized forms of competition" (highways) and the establishment of the 40-hour workweek for non-operating railroad employees on September 1. The annualized cost of this change was estimated to be $2.5 million.

On the plus side, Lackawanna was handling two-thirds of its gross ton-miles with diesel power. Further, this figure was destined to climb to near 85 percent by year's end, thanks to the delivery of six 3,000 h.p. EMD F7 duos and one 4,500 h.p. F7 trio for road freight work, as well as 10 Alco switchers. (As was common in the era, DL&W viewed multiple-unit carbody road diesels as single locomotives.)

The Lackawanna's primary event, however, occurred November 15, 1949, when it inaugurated the *Phoebe Snow* streamliner on a daylight schedule between DL&W's Hoboken (N.J.) Terminal and Buffalo. This maroon, gray, and

John R. Canfield

Manicured ballast and fresh F3's on busy double track helped foster Lackawanna's image of prosperity. Alas, it was a mirage.

gold beauty, named for the fictional advertising heroine of an earlier era on "The Road of Anthracite," was upon its debut the finest new passenger train to appear on any Class 1 trunk line of comparable size.

That year also marked a tentative start to my railroad career when I hired out as a summer laborer in the Lackawanna section gang based at Paterson, N.J., on the low-grade freight route known as the Boonton Branch. In those days, the only piece of mechanized track equipment used by our gang was a gasoline-powered rail saw. Everything else—even drilling bolt holes through the web of 131-lb. rail—was accomplished solely with human muscle and sweat.

The leveling of track surface, or "spot tamping," was a simple but frustrating activity. We used a track jack to lift one rail at the low spot. One gang member inserted a lining bar under the end of the tie to lift the tie against the plate, while his partner pounded rock ballast under the tie using a short-handle pickaxe. On the plus side, the gang got a respite each time a train approached (in those days, we worked "under traffic").

There were several daily Pacific-powered passenger locals, as well as the occasional daytime through freight moving behind either "covered wagon" diesels or the big Poconos, as DL&W called its 4-8-4's. Sometimes they'd be in tandem for the westbound 48-feet-to-the-mile climb to the New Jersey watershed at Port Morris, for which a combi-

Rail Photo Service: S. K. Bolton Jr.

New E8's 810 and 811 roll Binghamton morning local 47 through the Delaware Water Gap.

I. W. King; Joel King collection

Two outbound suburban trains diverge in 1953 at West End Tower in Jersey City. The Pacific is curving onto the Boonton Branch as the electric M.U.'s hold to the Morris & Essex main line.

nation of F3 and 4-8-4 was rated at 4,790 tons. After a couple of months of this unaccustomed toil, at the princely rate of $1.06 per hour ($1.59 on Saturdays), I was more than happy to return for my high school senior year!

Thanks primarily to the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, the Lackawanna's net income in 1950 rose to $3.8 million, or $2.28 per share. Faced with more than $19 million of Construction Bonds due to mature soon, DL&W management embarked on a complicated refinancing effort but still was able to increase its holdings in the stock of the Nickel Plate Road, its key western connection, to 66,000 shares.

Only four locomotives (Also RS3's) were delivered in 1950, but DL&W had on order 29 more units, all road-switchers. Owing to considering multiple-unit road engines as "single locomotives" (each of which shared a common road number, with letter suffixes), DL&W's 31 F-unit "engines" actually totaled 75 units: 45 cab ("A") units and 30 booster ("B") units. Stated another way, Lackawanna owned five A-B-A, 86-mph, steam-generator-equipped passenger engines; seven A-B-A and six A-B freighters geared for 65 mph; and one A-B-A and 12 A-B "drag engines" geared for 45 or 48 mph [see roster, opposite page]. There was one exception to the A-B nature of the two-unit freighters—F7 631A and C, which was two cab units!

This practice of buying locomotives a few at a time for specific assignments—in DL&W's case, chiefly low-speed engines east of Scranton, with faster ones to the west—was common to many railroads just converting to diesels, but would have future repercussions.

Quiet 100th, change at the top

The Lackawanna celebrated its centennial on October 15, 1951, quietly, with the festivities limited to the dedication of a plaque at the Scranton passenger station commemorating the start-up of ancient predecessor Liggetts Gap Railroad. Of greater importance, from a non-historical standpoint, was the delivery that year of its 11 2,250 h.p. EMD E8's, the "Cadillac" of passenger diesels. This acquisition released the five original 4,500 h.p. F3 passenger trios, after re-gearing for a maximum of 65 mph, to fast freight service. The latter did retain their steam generators, though, and would be pressed into commuter service later in their careers.

A significant management change occurred in summer 1952. William White, Lackawanna's wartime leader and architect of its financial restructuring, accepted the presidency of the New York Central. He was succeeded by Perry M. Shoemaker, who'd been serving as vice president-operations. Shoemaker was destined, by events beyond his control, to guide the Lackawanna toward seeking ultimate salvation through merger.

The summer of 1952 also marked my return to Lackawanna's ranks, this time in the operating department. Although still a full-time university student, I hired out as an extra towerman on the Morris & Essex Division, ultimately becoming qualified at 14 of the division's 17 staffed interlockings. The control machines varied from state-of-the-art CTC units to several "armstrong" interlocking plants where manual levers were used to move several hundred feet of pipe that ultimately positioned and locked the switch points.

Entering the towermen's ranks was hardly a shrewd career move, since the railroad was actively pursuing the consolidation of three towers to be controlled from a new location at Newark, as well as the substitution of dispatcher-controlled CTC for three towers on the Boonton Branch. It did, however, provide me a temporary if uneven income, free transportation to and from school in New York, and a unique perspective of an interesting rail operation very much in a state of flux.

On the occasion of my 21st birthday, June 5, 1953, I was called to cover a vacancy as second-trick leverman at Grove Street Tower, one mile west of Hoboken Terminal. I cleared the five westbound signals on track 3 for the passage of the last scheduled steam-powered passenger train from Hoboken. The train was the 6 o'clock "semi-express" to Dover, No. 1067, pulled by 79-inch-drivered Pacific 1121 under the command of engineer Russell "Butch" Lawrence. (The last recorded use of steam power anywhere on the system occurred in Scranton yard on July 13.)

Overall during 1953, Lackawanna

Walter Appel

After a short 1957 trial with solid gray (fourth unit) that was vetoed, DL&W standardized on the simpler passenger version of its colors (first two units), not the freight (third unit).

The ABC's of DL&W F units

Nos.	Models	Built	DB/SG	Units	EMD Order	Gearing	Remarks
601-604 A-B-C	FT A-B-A	1945	DB	12	E628	62:15	"Freight A-B-A"
605-606 A-B-C	F3 A-B-A	1946	DB	6	E763	62:15	"Freight A-B-A"
611 A-B-C	F7 A-B-A	1949	DB	3	E852	62:15	"Freight A-B-A,"
621 A-B-C	F3 A-B-A	1948	DB	3	E1002	65:12	"Drag A-B-A"
631 A, C	F7 A-B	1949	DB	2	E852	62:15	"Freight A-A"
632-636 A-B	F7 A-B	1949	DB	10	E1059	62:15	"Freight A-B"; 636B was order E852
651-654 A-B	FT A-B	1945	DB	8	E627	65:12	"Drag A-B"
655-656 A-B	F3 A-B	1947	DB	4	E711	65:12	"Drag A-B"
657-662 A-B	F3 A-B	1948	DB	12	E853	65:12	"Drag A-B"
801-802 A-B-C	F3 A-B-A	1946	SG	6	E710	62:15	"Passenger A-B-A"
803-805 A-B-C	F3 A-B-A	1947	SG	9	E789	62:15	"Passenger A-B-A"

Notes: DB = Dynamic brake equipped; SG = Steam generator equipped
Sources: EMD Product Reference Data 1957, *Extra 2200 South* 1968.—*J.D.I.*

enjoyed its highest net income per share ($3.94) since 1929 on gross revenue of almost $90 million. Of concern was the continuing erosion of the onetime staple anthracite traffic, which was forcing DL&W to pursue additional interline merchandise business even as two-thirds of that year's revenue was already coming from it. This was why DL&W owned slightly over 15 percent of the Nickel Plate's stock and was attempting to elect two directors to its board.

The position of towerman wasn't entirely devoid of opportunities to critically observe management's foibles. After graduation in June 1954, I applied for a day-shift "temporary hold down" at Millburn Tower, which I won despite my puny two-plus years of seniority. I had a steady job! Millburn was on the electrified main line 17 miles west of Hoboken Terminal; its manual-lever interlocking controlled the turnouts and crossovers that reduced the triple track from Hoboken to double track west up the 3-mile grade to Summit.

Management foibles? In spring 1955, a "pre-arranged detour" (as opposed to an emergency one to bypass a derailment or such) was established between Millburn and Summit to provide for single-track operation. It was in effect daily following the morning rush hour. The purpose was to permit a work train to distribute rail—more than 1,500 39-foot "sticks" totaling 1,060 tons—for installation on both main tracks later that summer. Setting up the detour allowed the midday local passenger trains, operating on 30-minute headway in both directions, to run past the work extra with minimum delay.

No sooner had the rail been distributed, though, than the work train returned and proceeded to reload all 1,060 tons of it! Once this was accomplished, the rail was redistributed to the Summit cut, a depression through the heart of the community just west of Summit Tower. Rumor had it that this costly change of plans was ordered by a top company officer who lived near the cut and was the recipient of noise complaints from influential neighbors.

Needless to say, later that year the work train reappeared at Millburn and proceeded to distribute new rail for installation on the original segment. In all fairness, I was not in a position to know the cause of these managerial machinations, be they executive arrogance or the failure of the Maintenance of Way folks to argue the wastefulness in labor, crews, and fuel of rearranging the sequence of rail replacement. The obvious conclusion to this business-school graduate, though, was that the costs of the "additions and betterments" for that year were needlessly high.

Following a financially mediocre 1954 and a promising start to '55, Mother Nature made her contribution to the Lackawanna's ultimate downfall. Late in the afternoon of August 18, Hurricane Diane struck the Pocono Mountains with a steady torrential downpour. Lazy mountain streams rose at an alarming rate, some as much as 30 feet. The Delaware River flooded its valley sufficiently to reach the eaves of the Water Gap station. Sunrise on the following day found the Lackawanna main line and two branches severed at 88 locations. A 400-foot-long, double-track bridge and two major culverts were destroyed. Six trains and 17 diesels were stranded in the 59 miles between

Phoebe and her friends

Lackawanna jumped into the postwar, lightweight streamliner waters in 1949 when it inaugurated the daytime *Phoebe Snow*, but her cars were among a fleet delivered by the three major carbuilders of the time also for service on her nighttime opposites, the Hoboken-Buffalo *Westerner* and the eastbound *New Yorker*. The former offered a 5 a.m. connection to Nickel Plate 7, also the *Westerner*, while DL&W's *New Yorker* connected off nameless NKP Chicago-Buffalo train 8 at 11 p.m.

American Car & Foundry supplied 15 coaches and 9 "10&6" (10 roomettes, 6 double bedrooms) sleepers; Pullman-Standard 10 coaches; and Budd 2 dining cars and 2 observation-tavern-lounge cars. The diners and obs cars were for *Phoebe* exclusively, but the coaches and sleepers were also for the night trains, which continued to utilize heavyweight dining cars after getting the lightweight coaches and sleepers in 1950.

The *Westerner* and *New Yorker* were discontinued by DL&W successor Erie Lackawanna in 1963. The *Phoebe Snow* name was shifted by EL to the former Erie Chicago-Hoboken *Lake Cities* service, which lasted until 1966.—*J. David Ingles*

John Dziobko

***Phoebe*'s two tavern-observations, one of which rested at Hoboken Terminal on May 19, 1956, survive in business use on Metro-North.**

the Delaware River and Scranton, Pa.

In an achievement reflecting credit on railroading in general, and DL&W management and the engineering department in particular, through service was restored in just 28 days. Permanent casualties included 10 miles of track No. 4 between Scranton and Elmhurst, Pa., and almost 3 miles converted from double to single track between the Delaware Water Gap and East Stroudsburg.

The total cost of repairs and restoration was held to $7.5 million, of which $5.4 million was charged to current operations resulting in a net loss for 1955 of $986,000. In spite of this natural disaster, the railroad continued to move forward with reducing fixed debt to the tune of almost $7 million during the year. This, combined with the flood expense, caused a weakening in net current assets of $11.3 million, a substantial amount at the time.

Merger premonitions

The Lackawanna and the Nickel Plate had a long and successful history of interchanging coaches, sleepers, and large blocks of manifest freight over the Buffalo gateway. At this time, the Lackawanna owned 17.8 percent of NKP stock, which paid it dividends of over $1 million in 1955. The original thought behind this investment was to pave the way, God and the Interstate Commerce Commission willing, toward an end-to-end merger. Nickel Plate's specialty was moving freight fast, which it did between Buffalo and Chicago, Peoria, and St. Louis—the Lackawanna, in effect, put the "New York" in NKP's official name: New York, Chicago & St. Louis.

However, in the Lackawanna's 1955 annual report, there appeared a single sentence indicating plans to distribute 13 percent of this NKP holding as a stock dividend during 1956. Reading between the lines, one must conclude that the hopes of merger, long opposed by NKP presumably owing to Lackawanna's heavy outstanding debt, were being acknowledged as unrealistic.

The same annual report mentioned several areas of potential savings through facilities coordination with parallel and long-time rival Erie Railroad, "without involving in any way the question of merger." This statement offers significant insight into the Lackawanna's thinking regarding this option as late as March 15, 1956 (the issuance date of the annual report).

Specifically, Erie and DL&W freight stations at Binghamton and Elmira, N.Y., were combined in November 1955. Other projects being studied included the integration of the two roads' marine departments serving New York harbor, the possibility of rerouting all Erie passenger service from its terminal in Jersey City into the Lackawanna's Hoboken Terminal, and the combination of 75 miles of parallel main lines in western New York State.

In 1956, driven by gross revenues of almost $89 million, Lackawanna succeeded in bringing more than $5 million to the bottom line, earning $3.06 per share. New equipment installed included its last new road diesels, 500 boxcars, 100 covered hoppers, more piggyback flats, and five diesel tugboats for New York harbor service. The road diesels were two Fairbanks-Morse 2,400 h.p. Train Masters, Nos. 860-861, which unlike Nos. 850-859 from 1953, lacked steam generators.

Unfortunately, it was destined to be all downhill from here.

On October 13, 1956, I was unceremoniously pulled from my sinecure at Millburn and installed as second leverman at West End Tower, where the Boonton Branch joined the main line for the final 2 miles into Hoboken Terminal. The change was "necessary" owing to the implementation of Step 1 of the terminal coordination project with the Erie. Since this was also a day job with a higher rate of pay, I had no objection to filling in until the job was permanently assigned.

An additional electropneumatic interlocking machine had been installed to accommodate the rerouting of the Erie's passenger traffic. This machine controlled a new Bergen Junction, where Erie trains from its main line, its Bergen County Cutoff, and two branch lines entered the multiple-track Boonton Branch of the Lackawanna. The machine also controlled the new Greenwood Lake Junction, where trains from that branch as well as the Newark Branch entered our Boonton Branch.

All of these additions notwithstanding, the second leverman position was hardly necessary given that under Step 1, the only rush-hour Erie train routed through West End was No. 6, the *Lake Cities* from Chicago and Cleveland. All off-peak and weekend trains were to use Hoboken Terminal, but absent the rush-hour traffic, the regular weekday staff of one leverman to line the routes and one operator to handle communi-

I. W. King; Joel King collection

Signature Lackawanna: At Port Morris, N.J., in 1952, FM Train Masters waited with an eastbound on the Cutoff next to SW9 559. Curving off to the left is the original main via Netcong.

cations should have been adequate. This would change in March 1957 when *all* Erie passenger trains were shifted to Hoboken, but I was destined to view this final consolidation from a different perspective.

Deeper studies

Toward the end of 1956, Lackawanna uncharacteristically recruited an outsider into its operating management ranks, one Lynn B. Coleman, formerly superintendent for the Rio Grande at Grand Junction, Colo. It soon became apparent that Coleman's charge as General Superintendent, among other things, was to overhaul Lackawanna's overly conservative motive-power policy for the improvement of the gross ton-miles per freight-train-hour statistic. Of interest is that Lackawanna and Rio Grande were similar in size, traffic, profile, and operations, this being well before D&RGW's inauguration of a policy of short, fast freight trains.

Effective January 1, 1957, I was promoted into management ranks—to the lowest rung of the corporate ladder. The position was Transportation Inspector, essentially a "car chaser" working out of the Manager of Transportation's office in New York. My basic duty was to travel all our yards searching for violations of FRA car-service rules, which alienated one forever from local managers. My immediate project, though, was to audit dispatcher train sheets to evaluate options for routing freight over parallel DL&W and Erie line segments to advance the merger study, which finally had been acknowledged. Former Erie dispatcher Jack O'Connor did the honors for our potential partner.

Unfortunately, the study contained a major anomaly—the base months selected for comparison were in 1956, before Lackawanna had addressed its perennial problem of underpowered freights. Lackawanna's route between the New York waterfront and Binghamton, N.Y., was 21 miles shorter than Erie's and was not subject to the New York state full-crew law east of Scranton. However, the use of two- and three-unit freight diesels necessitated costly helper engines on virtually all DL&W trains through the Pocono Mountains in both directions.

Erie's route, on the other hand, had two short helper districts for eastbound traffic, and its four-unit diesels frequently attacked those grades unassisted. Needless to say, the study's recommendation was to route the lion's share of traffic on the Erie side. (Years later, while riding over the superbly aligned New Jersey Cutoff, I heard Erie Lackawanna General Superintendent J. M.

Clifford A. Redanz

Friendly connection: Storm-delayed EL train L-3 (a post-merger designation) has arrived Buffalo on February 5, 1961, behind renumbered F7 6361; NKP's train 5 (rear) has held for 40 minutes.

Bruce Owen Nett

Two of DL&W's 18 RS3's approach West End Tower on the Boonton Branch in 1951 with empty hoppers bound for Hoboken. The Alcos were unique on the road in having sans-serif lettering.

Moonshower abusing this decision and contrasting this Lackawanna trackage with Erie's Delaware Division, which had 189 curves in less than 100 miles!)

Step 2 of the New Jersey passenger terminal coordination project was implemented as scheduled in March. Its success was a tribute to those responsible for planning operations, especially the movements between Hoboken Terminal itself and some Erie equipment storage facilities still in use in Jersey City, which would be accessed via a new connection to the freight-only Weehawken Branch.

One problem requiring careful supervision was the loading of the Hudson River passenger ferries to prevent overcrowding during the morning rush hour. Each weekday morning, several of us "minor league" managers, armed with thumb-actuated counting devices, were assigned to the ramps at the ferry slips (three to each) to try to determine when the boats were approaching capacity. As the combined count neared the saturation point, we would signal the gateman, who would, in turn, attempt to hold the attacking mob at bay and close the gates. The crowds cooperated, and no injuries were reported.

On October 16, 1957, Lackawanna's operating department was reorganized to achieve more rigid control of service. The Scranton and Buffalo divisions were combined and a new, 24-hour

Office of Transportation Supervisors was established at Scranton. Its responsibility was to assign all motive power and oversee the makeup, dispatch, and performance of system freight service. The formerly "independent" two- and three-unit F-unit sets were reassigned, to the extent possible, into four-unit locomotives with common inspection dates. Making this difficult was the lack of nose receptacles for jumper cables on the 45 cab units and that the FT's were connected by drawbars. Nevertheless, the symbol freights were finally being dispatched with adequate power for Lackawanna's rugged profile.

General Superintendent Coleman's effort to rationalize the diesel fleet encountered two minor setbacks. Concurrent with realigning the freight power, it was decided to continue the use of two E8's on passenger trains east of Scranton but cut back to a single unit on the same trains between Scranton and Buffalo. (This resurrected the old steam practice, which saw 4-8-4's on passenger trains on the east end but 4-6-4's on the west end.) This experiment came to an abrupt halt after the single E8 on a 10-car westbound *Phoebe Snow* experienced the failure of one of the unit's two prime movers west of Elmira, N.Y., with the result that the streamliner stalled on York Hill.

In an effort to reduce down time for the scarce freight diesels, it was decided to send them out from the paint shop in plain gray dress with maroon lettering and yellow grab handles in lieu of the traditional gray with maroon and gold

John Dziobko

The last of DL&W's eight SW8's mingles with E8's and GP7 967 at Hoboken in May 1956. Of GP7's 951-970, the last five had steam boilers. All pre-Train Master hood units were black.

striping. As I recall, engines 655 and 656 were the guinea pigs. Although the front office, thankfully, shot down this proposal, a compromise was reached in that henceforth, all passenger and freight road engines received the more practical passenger paint scheme.

Retrenchment begins

For 1957, the Lackawanna managed to eke out a miniscule net profit of $430,000, but the hard truths of railroad economics in the Northeast came home to roost the following year. DL&W's suburban passenger-service deficit and confiscatory property taxes, primarily in Hudson County, N.J., continued unabated as gross revenues dropped to their lowest annual total since 1946. The resultant net deficit for 1958 totaled almost $4 million.

In addition to the institutional problems, the need to replace the aging double-track swing bridge over the Hackensack River at West Secaucus, N.J., could not be postponed. The replacement, a single-track vertical lift bridge together with the necessary interlocking changes, cost $5.5 million.

One of the many problems facing the Lackawanna was excess track capacity. Although the proposed coordination of facilities with the Erie in upstate New York would address this problem on DL&W's west end, fewer train movements on the east end (outside of suburban territory) required immediate action. An obvious target for plant rationalization was the 28-mile, double-track cutoff between Port Morris Junction, N.J., and the Delaware River. Long regarded by Lackawanna men as a state-of-the-art "super railroad" (long before John W. Barriger coined the term), the cutoff boasted a grade-separated right of way that, eastward, ascended the 618 feet from the river to the New Jersey watershed on a maximum grade of 29 feet to the mile. The line had only 14 curves, all but one of 2 degrees or less. This superb alignment through the rolling northwest Jersey terrain, completed in 1911, was accomplished by cut-and-fill engineering that necessitated relocating 15 million cubic yards of material. The Pequest fill alone was more than 3 miles long and averaged 110 feet above the valley floor.

Ignoring the "pride factor," management saw that the average 21 trains per day could be run without big delay on CTC-signaled single track. Accordingly, the westbound main was retired between mileposts 48.2 and 72.2 save for a 3-mile double siding at Greendell.

On March 2, 1959, the Lackawanna, desperate for cash, finally abandoned its dream of merger with the Nickel Plate and liquidated its NKP investment, realizing $15.3 million. This windfall paid off the Upper Hackensack bridge replacement loan and brought all unpaid bills to current status. August 31 marked the beginning of joint operation using 75.5 miles of the Erie main line between Binghamton and Gibson, N.Y.

Of greater significance was the June 24 signing of the Joint Agreement of Merger with the Erie and the subsequent filing on July 1 of the application for merger with the ICC. Not surprisingly, 97 percent of Lackawanna's stock was voted for the merger. Industry opposition was limited to token objections from four connecting carriers.

Port Morris drills

At this time, although still an assistant trainmaster, I was headquartered at Port Morris yard, 46 miles west of Hoboken, and more or less "on my own." My principal responsibilities included the operation of what was basically an interchange yard with five regular yard-crew assignments daily. In addition, five local freights, or "drills" as they were called on our railroad, originated from Port Morris serving Paterson, Boonton, Dover, Summit, and the Sussex Branch. There was also a nightly interchange run, Nos. 71 and 66, to Phillipsburg, N.J., where a daily yard crew made and received deliveries with the Pennsylvania, Jersey Central, and Lehigh Valley. New England traffic was routed to and from the New Haven Railroad connection at Maybrook, N.Y., via two Lehigh & Hudson River round trips terminating and originating at Port Morris daily. Port Morris was the perfect assignment for on-the-job training, but even this outpost could produce career jeopardizing situations, as we shall soon see.

All operating supervisors were re-

John Dziobko

Three of the 141 electric M.U. motor cars from Lackawanna's 70-mile, 1930-31 suburban electrification leave Hoboken on January 17, 1959.

When DL&W gave the Democrats the run-around

In August 1957, I'd been promoted to assistant trainmaster, headquartered for training purposes at Hoboken. Although I was pleased to have my name appear on the employee timetable, I soon would experience one of those unforeseen operating snafus that can cause the company public relations problems and also nip supervisory careers in the bud. On this occasion, the Passaic County Democratic Club was sponsoring a cruise on the Hudson River, and chartered two 12-car trains from the Lackawanna to take participants to the Hoboken docks on a September Sunday morning. The trains would lay over all day and return the passengers to their suburban stations in the evening.

One of these specials was under my purview, and everything went without a hitch on the morning run. The trains each were made up of 12 electric M.U. cars, from the storage yard at Dover, with motive power provided by an FM Train Master diesel. This set the stage for embarrassment, because the train-line communication connections on the electric cars were not compatible with the air-communicating whistle in the diesel. This forced us to use hand signals to depart from stations.

It was well after dinnertime when the excursion boat returned to Hoboken. We loaded the revelers, many of whom had spent the cruise imbibing, and started for home. The head two cars were empty save for a youth obviously suffering from a beating and his two alleged assailants seated behind and sullenly observing their victim. I smelled potential trouble in getting them off my train without incident, so I climbed over onto the locomotive and had the train stopped at a wayside phone so I could call the dispatcher and tell him to notify the police to meet us at Paterson, our combatants' intended destination.

Two Paterson patrolmen were waiting as we arrived, and the toughs were offloaded without incident. The head brakeman, using an ancient kerosene lantern, then attempted to pass a highball signal to his conductor farther back along the train, but because the westward platform at Paterson was on the outside of a curve, the engineer couldn't see the conductor or the progress of the passenger unloading. But he did see the head brakie's signal, so he whistled off and headed west! Within two minutes, I was met by our veteran conductor, Barney Rice, who told me we still had some 300 angry Democrats on board, whose detraining at Paterson had been interrupted by our premature departure!

Thinking fast, I arranged to have the locomotive run around our train at Lincoln Park, 8 miles to the west, and return east to get the people to their intended destination. (Backing up the train to Paterson without the communicating whistle would have been too dangerous.) Once we unloaded the rest of the Paterson passengers, we made another run-around move in Paterson Junction yard where, fortunately, our 189-ton locomotive stayed atop the ancient 85-lb. rail! Even after providing the superintendent with a report of this fiasco, I remained employed.—*John R. Canfield*

Two photos, Bill Price: Al Chione collection

On the last day of May 1951, road FT set 604 struggled up to Clarks Summit, Pa., with a coal train as a four-unit set of low-geared FT's shoved on the rear. The wooden caboose is positioned behind the helper owing to the limited buffing strength of the underframe.

quired to make a full slate of monthly "efficiency tests," the unannounced creation of conditions requiring crews, operators, and dispatchers to respond precisely as the Standard Code of Operating Rules required. Many of these tests involved changing signal indications or darkening color-light signals and observing the response of enginemen. One less-than-popular test involved Rule 796 and called for the placement of temporary slow-order signs along a main track in high-speed territory. If the crew had not been forewarned by bulletin or train order, a speed of 10 mph was mandatory. This test was the direct result of the tragic Woodbridge, N.J., wreck on February 5, 1951, in which a speeding Pennsylvania Railroad commuter train overlooked these warning signs, derailed, and rolled down an embankment, killing more than 100 passengers.

On the last Friday of August 1959, I realized I hadn't made my quota of tests for the month. Aware that train No. 5, *The Twilight*, was running with an advance section in anticipation of heavy Labor Day weekend traffic, I hurried out on the cutoff and set the portable advance warning board, the slow board, and the resume-speed board with a mechanically actuated speed-measuring clock between the latter two signs. I had no way of knowing that Paul Donovan, a Scranton Division trainmaster, was also planning to waylay the two sections of No. 5 with a signal test that same afternoon!

Both engine crews responded properly to my surprise test, and I headed for home. Later that evening, I received a phone call from an irate Morris & Essex Division Superintendent Craddock. It seems that DL&W President Perry Shoemaker was riding the locomotive of regular No. 5 and, having been delayed twice within 25 miles, wanted to know "why all the local supervision was waiting until the end of the month to make their test quotas."

There is no proper answer to such a charge, other than we were, of course, ignorant of our president's travel plans. Privately, I thought our top executive should be pleased that his first-line troops were on the ball, but Mr. Shoemaker probably suspected that the tests were for his benefit, which was certainly not the case.

That incident notwithstanding, on April 1, 1960, I was promoted to trainmaster, still assigned to Port Morris, then soon moved to the Scranton Division, assigned to the "cement territory" of the Bangor & Portland (Pa.) branch. There, I would witness first-hand the steady erosion of traffic, in this case bulk cement diverted to air-activated tank trucks. Peak loadings at the six mills served by the Lackawanna dwindled from the 230 to 240 carloads on Fridays of previous summers to an anemic 90 cars during this last summer of our independent operation.

The Lackawanna's fortunes continued to decline through the remainder of 1960, and on October 17, we merged with our old "hated" rival, the Erie. Said President Shoemaker, "Upon merger, the Lackawanna will go out of existence as a company which has never gone into bankruptcy, and as a company proud of its heritage and tradition of giving superior service to the public." I can only add a heartfelt "Amen."