

AN ALCO SAFARI RETROSPECTIVE

# Between



Eureka! Dressed in Southern Pacific Daylight-inspired colors, PA No. 17 idles in the late afternoon sun beside wrecked sister D&H 16 on the Empalme shop lead Feb. 19, 1993.

# the lines

BY GREG MCDONNELL // Photos by the author



**“Yo.”** Calls from *Trains* magazine editor Kevin P. Keefe never opened with a conventional greeting. “If I had a budget for a big story,” Kevin continued, “and you could go anywhere and do anything, what would it be?” The question caught me off guard, but the answer was simple and unhesitating: an Alco Safari.

The reference might have been abstract in other company, but Kevin immediately understood. Our generation had long ago adopted from David P. Morgan the use of the word “safari” in specific definition and context that traced directly to Steam Safari, the collaborative work of Morgan and photographer Philip R. Hastings first published in the April 1954 issue of *Trains*.

“A pair of hunters take to the Canadian woods in search of a vanishing species” read the subhead of Steam Safari, the first installment of what would become a monumental trilogy chronicling Morgan and Hastings’ search for steam in the U.S. and Canada as dieselization swept the continent and changed railroading forever. The quest began in Montreal in November 1953 and ultimately encompassed three trips through the next two years. Presented in three parts — In Search of Steam, Smoke over the Prairies, and Steam in Indian Summer — the stories were serialized in some 30 issues of *Trains* between April 1954 and August 1957. The magical fusion of Morgan’s prose and Hastings’ photographs would redefine railway photojournalism and inspire generations to come.

Four decades after Morgan and Hastings set out on their legendary steam safari, a new generation of faithful were combing the continent in search of the very locomotives D.P.M. and the good Doctor had been racing to keep ahead of. First-generation diesels in general — and the locomotives of minority builders in particular were as endangered in the early 1990s as steam had been in the 1950s. Save for museums the rarest of the rare — Baldwin, Fairbanks-Morse, and Lima diesels — were already all but extinct. But those of the American Locomotive



**Food vendors, passengers and railroaders crowd the station platform at Empalme as FNM C36-7 424 pulls in with Guadalajara-Nogales train No. 3 on Feb. 16, 1993.**

Co., its Canadian affiliate Montreal Locomotive Works, and successor Bombardier were hanging on in scattered strongholds throughout North America.

An Alco safari was a natural.

If the trio of Canadian Pacific 4-4-0s assigned to mixed train duty between Norton and Chipman, N.B., were the Holy Grail for Morgan and Hastings in 1953, the quartet of former Delaware & Hudson Alco PAs that migrated to Mexico in 1978 were the diesel equivalent in 1993. Empalme, the Sonoran former Ferrocarril Del Pacifico division point the PAs called home, seemed as distant and exotic as Chipman had 40 years earlier. If this Alco safari was to be a meaningful quest, there was but one place to begin.

There was a certain urgency to the mission. The PAs had been given up for dead once already. All four were out of service and derelict in Empalme by 1985: D&H 16 was wrecked in a disastrous derailment and rollover in 1981, and the other three were sidelined one by one with fire damage.

Empalme rocked the railway world in early 1989 when D&H 19 emerged from



**Waiting on a miracle. The glassless cab windows of D&H 18 — a stripped and derelict hulk — frame DH-17, the only operating PA in the world. Only Doyle McCormack would dare to dream that the 18 would run again. And he'd one day make it so.**

the shop in glistening two-tone FNM blue following a thorough overhaul complete with a brand-new 2,400-hp Bombardier/Alco 12-251 engine. In service for less than a year, the locomotive was unexpectedly appropriated by the National Museum of Mexican Railroads and put on display in Puebla. To make up for the loss of "their" PA, shop workers in Empalme rebuilt the 17 in 1991. Released

in FNM blue in August, DH-17 was painted again several months later and debuted on Feb. 28, 1992, in stunning Southern Pacific Daylight-inspired colors that paid tribute to the Pacific Region's Southern Pacific of Mexico (Sud Pacific de México) heritage. Generally assigned to the FNM's Guadalajara-Nogales passenger service, DH-17 was the last active PA anywhere.



**Vendors dispense hot and cold food and iced drinks to the passenger of No. 3 during its station stop and crew change at Empalme.**

Kevin gave a green light to the budget. Maureen granted all-important spousal approval to the odyssey — with a single surprising condition: “If you’re going to Mexico,” she decreed, “I’m coming along.” The Alco safari was on.

### ‘EUREKA’

It was pouring rain as AeroMéxico flight 465 touched down at Aeropuerto Internacional de Guaymas on Valentine’s Day 1993. Alejandro (Alex) Torres, manager of the Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México shop at Empalme, was there to meet us at the gate and drive us to our accommodations. I’d been keeping in contact with Alex and keeping tabs on the 17 in the days leading up to the trip. The fact that the locomotive had been stuck in Nogales for a few days was cause for concern. “The PA came in last night,” Alex offered as we drove through the rain. That’s all I needed to hear.

The rain was gone and the sky a glorious blue when, early the next morning, we drove up the palm tree-lined road leading to the Empalme shop; past the skeletal hulks of D&H PAs 16 and 18 and service tracks crowded with Alco RSDs, MLW M420TRs, Bombardier M424s and GE U-Boats, Dash 7s, and Super 7s. And there it was, the “genuine article” as DPM would say: DH-17, a bona fide, living, breathing Alco PA. The only operating PA on the planet.

“Eureka.” The celebratory one-word telegram that Morgan and Hastings had



**Shop workers Jesus Rodriguez and Hector Vazquez put wads of cotton waste to good use as they wipe the road dust from DH-17 outside the Empalme shop on Feb 15, 1993.**

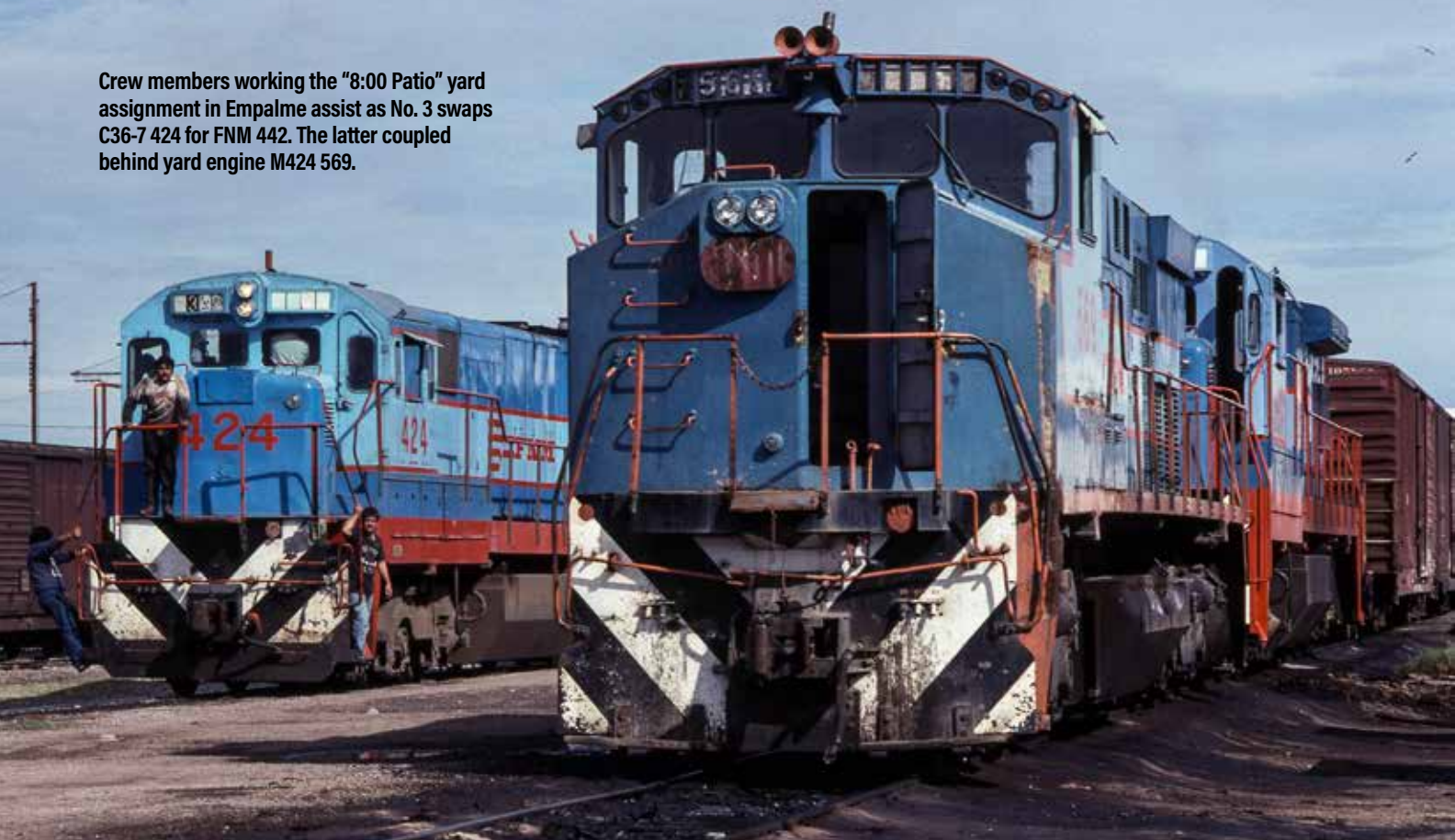
jointly dispatched from Chipman to Milwaukee upon encountering CP 4-4-0 136 under steam flashed in my mind as I stood in the presence of No. 17. Lost in the moment, entranced by the long, elegant machine before me and captivated by the beat of the Alco 251 engine idling within, I paused to consider the circumstances that put us in this magical place on an unlikely mission. Right about the time I reckoned it couldn’t be any better, Jesus Rodriguez and Hector Vazquez emerged from the shop with a bucket of water and wads of cotton waste and began wiping away the light coating of dust the PA had picked up on the road from Nogales.

A telegram being impossible, I found a phone and dialed Milwaukee. Dispensing with conventional formalities, I uttered a single word when Kevin picked up: “Eureka!”

### WAITING ON A MIRACLE

D&H 16 and 18, the two derelict PAs on the scrap line at Empalme, were by far the saddest locomotives we encountered. Worst of the two, D&H 16 bore the scars of its 1981 rollover accident: a crumpled cab and dented nose; structural members were buckled, its signature grilled headlight casing cracked in two. Both had been out of service since 1981.

Crew members working the "8:00 Patio" yard assignment in Empalme assist as No. 3 swaps C36-7 424 for FNM 442. The latter coupled behind yard engine M424 569.



Picked clean of all mechanical components and wiring, robbed of their stainless-steel carbody panels, Alco 251 engines, main generators and A1A trucks, the skeletal carcasses were propped on freight car trucks and left to rot in the Sonoran sun. Guardian angels kept the scrappers at bay and rumors persisted of negotiations to repatriate and restore at least one of the hulks. Standing in the gutted cab of D&H 18 or amid the mangled steel of No. 16's empty carbody made it clear that accomplishing such madness would require nothing short of a miracle.

Even as Alex and I eased the 17 alongside the hulks for a poignant PA family portrait, one of the greatest diesel dramas of all time was unfolding. Curator Bill Withuhn had been working behind the scenes for years to acquire one of the wrecked PAs for the Smithsonian Institution. Negotiating a successful deal would take years, during which time Doyle McCormack of Southern Pacific Daylight 4449 fame would join in and up the ante with an offer to take the second PA.

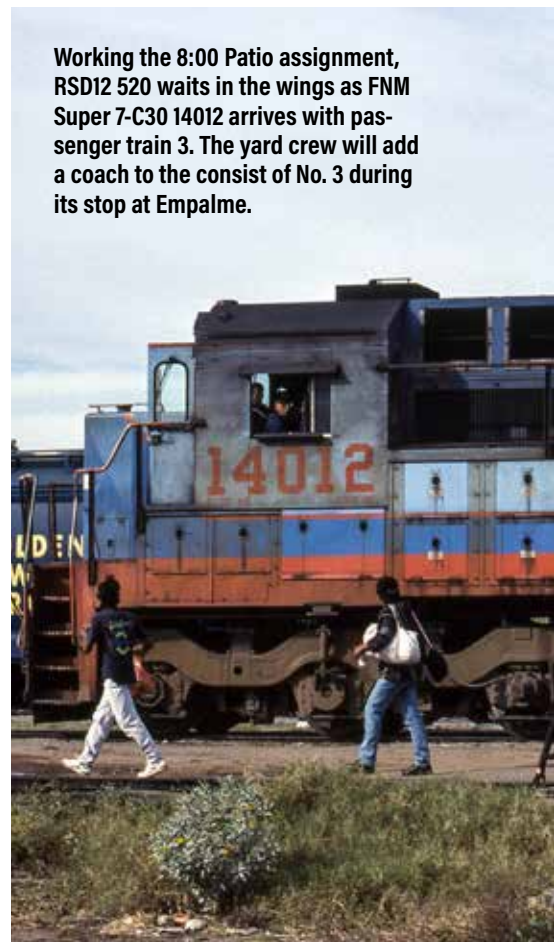
In October 2000, D&H 16 and 18 were loaded on flatcars in Empalme and began the journey home. The absence of trucks was greatest obstacle to restoring the PAs. Without them, restoration would be

impossible. McCormack located compatible General Steel Castings A1A trucks from former Pennsylvania RR Fairbanks-Morse Erie-built B units at a closed Canadian Pacific rail-welding facility in Smiths Falls, Ontario. He traded one set to the Smithsonian for title to D&H 18 and sourced wrecked BC Rail M420B 688 to provide a 12-251 engine, electrical cabinet, air brake racks, and other critical components to rebuild and restore the locomotive to operating condition as Nickel Plate 190.

After the Smithsonian's plans fell through, D&H 16 wound up at the Museum of the American Railroad in Frisco, Texas, where it is being restored to its original grandeur as Santa Fe 59L. Meanwhile, McCormack in 2023 sold the 190 to Genesee Valley Transportation. Its meticulous restoration to full operating condition nearly complete, No. 190 moved from Portland, Ore., to its new home on Delaware-Lackawanna in Scranton, Pa.

The odds against survival of the forlorn PA carcasses in Empalme were formidable. Circumstances that today find one returning to its Warbonnet origins and the other as an operating locomotive in the capable care of the best guardians imaginable is phenomenal.

Working the 8:00 Patio assignment, RSD12 520 waits in the wings as FNM Super 7-C30 14012 arrives with passenger train 3. The yard crew will add a coach to the consist of No. 3 during its stop at Empalme.



## OLD SCHOOL RULES

The PAs might have been the marquee attraction in Empalme, but the former Ferrocarril Del Pacifico junction, division point, and shop town stood on its own merit. An unspoiled sanctuary of old-school railroading, friendly railroaders, welcoming people — and by good fortune some of the best seafood in the world — Empalme was a captivating place.

A motley assortment of battered Alcos and MLWs covered yard assignments around the clock: RSD12s, M424s, and exotic looking API620 and BX620 C-Cs resembling nothing that had ever emerged from Schenectady or Montreal. The '620s were a local creation, among 23 FCP RSD5s remanufactured by Empalme shops between 1979 and 1986. Using kits provided by Alco Products and MLW successor Bombardier, Empalme transformed tired, 244-powered RSD5s into pug-nosed 1800-hp API620s (Alco kits) and BX620s (Bombardier kits) packing a brand-new 12-251 engine under a high, boxy hood.

Hanging around the Empalme yard and depot turned back the clock: Train crews flat-switched and kicked cars in a

heavy metal ballet set to the orchestral accompaniment of squealing wheels, clanking of cut levers, the crash of mating couplers, and the deep vocals of 12-cylinder 251s, all choreographed solely by hand signal. Sectionmen and track gangs rattled past on motorcars and trailers loaded with picks and shovels and track tools and wooden barrels of spikes and hardware. Conductors cleaned, refilled, lit, and hung kerosene marker lamps on the rear of cabooses that punctuated every freight train.

Inside the station the operator kept an ear tuned to the dispatcher's phone as he pounded out Form 19 and Form 31 train orders on an ancient typewriter and repeated them back to the DS in one of the oldest rituals of railroading. Train crews paused on the platform to review the flimsy carbon-copied Form 19s, Form 31s, and clearance cards granting them operating authority on a single-track, unsignaled main line governed by timetable and train orders.

The four-times daily arrival of FNM Guadalajara-Nogales passenger trains (northbound Nos. 1 and 3, southbound Nos. 2 and 4) put the Empalme

experience over the top. The platform would be crowded with passengers, food vendors, railroaders, and onlookers as the train rolled in. While train crews changed off and yard crews occasionally added or subtracted a coach or piggyback load to the head end, passengers leaned from open windows or stepped out to purchase hot and cold prepared food, iced drinks, and bottles of Coke from hawkers peddling their wares from trays, homemade carts, and ice-filled tubs. The excitement was palpable and 1993 felt like 1963.

## SNOW DAY IN THE SIERRAS, S-SERIES SHANGRI-LA

It'd been decades since the exhaust of Southern Pacific Alcos had last echoed over Donner Pass, but finishing up with the Napa Valley Wine Train FPA4s put us within earshot of SP's legendary Sierra Nevada crossing. We set aside our Alco agenda for a snow day in the Sierras. The rotaries were back in Roseville after being out the previous week, but the flangers and spreaders were still working The Hill. Maureen chose to stay warm and dry in Sacramento.

"It's a rental," I explained to the highway patrolman at the "chains required" checkpoint on I-80. The rain that greeted daybreak at Sacramento had turned to blizzard conditions by Baxter. Without chains, I fully expected to be turned back. "You're Canadian," the patrolman responded, "you know what you're doing. Go ahead." I caught sight of the spreaders near Donner Lake and made Truckee in time to watch a three-unit helper set couple to the head end of a westbound drag.

Deep snow, closed roads, and the lack of footwear and clothing suitable for an unplanned foray into the Sierra winter only enriched the experience. Richard Steinheimer stories and photographs that had immortalized Donner took on new meaning as I stood chest deep in the snow at Soda Springs, listening to the turbocharged howl of eight EMDs descending the west slope in full dynamics and savouring a taste of winter on what Stein dubbed "the granddaddy of all western mountain railroads." Flangers, SP freights, and Amtrak No. 5 kept blood circulating, adrenalin flowing, and the cold at bay.

Closing in on the final days of the trip, there was one item of unfinished Alco business on the docket: an appointment in Stockton with Messrs. McIntosh & Seymour and the all-Alco Stockton Terminal & Eastern. One of the last bastions of 539 power in the land, ST&E stabled a



small fleet of S1, S2, and S4 switchers, all Western Pacific heritage. My heart skipped a beat at the sight of ST&E S4 564, S1 505 and S2s 557 and 560 perfectly posed outside the outfit's nondescript enginehouse on the outskirts of Stockton.

In terms of aesthetics, glamour, or prowess, the weather-beaten S-series ST&E switchers couldn't hold a candle to the PAs of Empalme, the FPAs of Napa, or even the Apache Centuries we'd encountered during the past couple weeks. But they made up for it in character, endurance, and undeniable charm. For those convinced that the rhythmic beat of a McIntosh & Seymour 539 stands as one of the most enchanting in all dieseldom — and you can count me in their number — Stockton was Shangri-la.

### SOUVENIR

"I'll run out of good mechanical talent before I run out of Alco parts," Arkansas & Missouri CMO Randy Hannold declared as we wandered through aisle after aisle after aisle in a warehouse packed with a vast repository of everything Alco: from engine blocks and main generators to Pyle headlight assemblies from SP PAs and tiny bushings, belts, and bolts for 539, 244, and 251 engines. "There's something you need to have," Hannold told me as we finished up the tour. And with that, he had warehouse manager Bill Redemske produce a scarred McIntosh & Seymour 539 piston. No small trinket, the 18-inch-high, 12-inch-in-diameter piece of machinery weighed in at about 50-60 pounds.

"What IS that?" My enthusiasm for the artifact wasn't shared by everyone at home. Not at first, anyway. But the 539 piston ultimately received spousal blessing as a piece of industrial art and now sits polished and proudly displayed a few feet from where I'm typing this.

Meanwhile, A&M has run out of neither talent nor Alco parts. Its celebrated fleet of C420s has been supplemented by a few secondhand EMD SD70ACes, but A&M's polished C420s soldier on through the Ozarks.

### EMPIRE BUILDERS

By all appearances, the two green-and-yellow former Central Vermont RS1s working in the concrete canyons of "elevator alley" in Buffalo, N.Y., had their best years behind them. Rolled out of Schenectady in August 1956 as Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific 3600 and 3604 — and traded back and forth between CN subsidiaries DW&P and CV

throughout their Class I railroad careers — the high-hood, notched-nose Alcos had long ago turned in their final performances hauling tonnage through the wilds of northern Minnesota and racing New England hotshots through the mountains of Vermont to the Connecticut shore. Their "CV" logos carefully altered to "GV" by owner Genesee Valley Transportation and cabs sub-lettered "DL&W" for GVT's nearby Depew, Lancaster & Western operation, DLWR 3600 and 3604 were consigned to the less than glamorous business of fulfilling the terms of a contract to shuffle boxcars and covered hoppers in and out of the aging Conagra flour mill on the edge of the Buffalo River.

Appearance proved deceptive. Faded paint and a rust-streaked tattered look disguised a promising future. More than mere hangers-on, DLWR 3604 and 3600 were at the vanguard of what would soon become one of the most progressive and successful regional railroad operations in the land. For the 37-year-old RS1s, better days were ahead. The pair would soon get glistening coats of GVT's Alco demonstrator-inspired corporate colors, full DL&W lettering, GVT/DL&W heralds, and road numbers 1800 and 1804.

Genesee Valley Transportation got its start with the 1988 acquisition of the two Central Vermont RS1s and its foot in the door with the 1989 DL&W startup on three miles of county owned, onetime Delaware, Lackawanna & Western main line between Depew and Lancaster, N.Y., followed by the contract with Conagra. From the seeds of that simple startup would soon blossom a 318-mile regional railroad network including five short lines in two states, with no fewer than 35 operating Alco/MLW diesels. GVT's selection of Schenectady- and Montreal-built locomotives came not from any sentimental attachment, but because they were the most cost-effective, fuel-efficient, and capable locomotives for the job. The two green RS1s set the standard.

All that was in the future. For all we

knew on that September afternoon, the veteran Alcos at Conagra were notable for little more than the fact that of 426 RS1s built, they were among a handful still in existence. We headed east with our sights set on the former BC Rail, ex-Erie Lackawanna C425s at work on Genesee Valley's latest startup, the Mohawk, Adirondack & Northern, little realizing that the RS1s in the rearview mirror were more than mere survivors; they were empire builders.

**Former VIA Rail Canada FPA4s 71 and 73 bask in the California sun at Napa. No. 71 and sister 70 will work the evening Wine Train.**





**Eight EMDs, three head-end helpers, and four road engines trudge through the snow at Soda Springs, Calif., as they descend the west slope of the Sierras with a westbound Southern Pacific manifest.**



**McIntosh & Seymour lives! Stockton Terminal & Eastern S2 560, S1 505, S2 557, and S4 564 repose outside the Stockton, Calif enginehouse. All four are Western Pacific alumni.**



**Polished from the tip of its low nose and high-mounted brass bell to the rear of its long hood, Arkansas & Missouri 46 leads a quartet of pristine C420s hurrying through Greenland, Ark., with the northbound Fort Smith turn.**

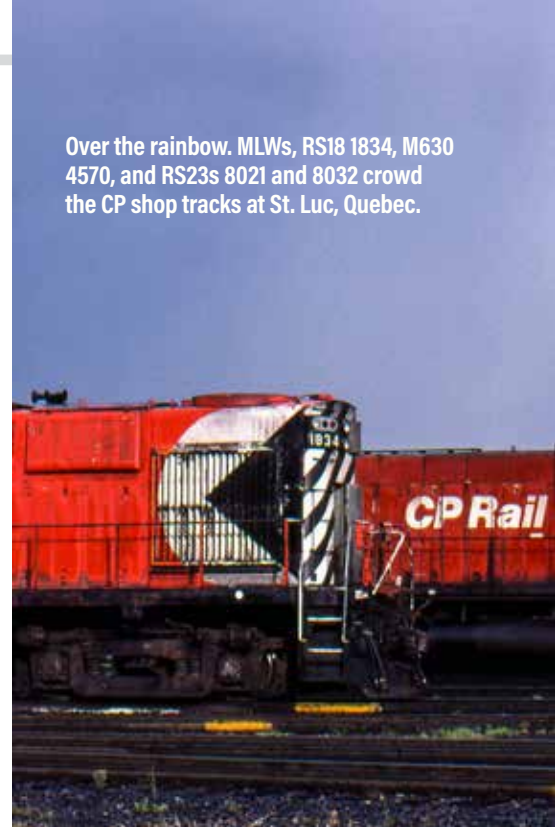


**From used McIntosh & Seymour 539 pistons (left) to new-in-the-box Alco parts of all sizes, Arkansas & Missouri's diesel shops have it all.**





**Empire builder:** one of two former Central Vermont RS11s that helped Genesee Valley Transportation get its start, DL&W 3604 holds down a contract switching assignment at Buffalo, N.Y.



Over the rainbow. MLWs, RS18 1834, M630 4570, and RS23s 8021 and 8032 crowd the CP shop tracks at St. Luc, Quebec.



Giving up parts to keep others on the road, CP M636s 4724 and 4703 sit forlornly in the company of still-active C424s, M630s, and M636s at St. Luc diesel shop in west suburban Montreal.



Removal of the engine hood of CP M636 4724 affords easy access for mechanics to remove salvageable parts from the forever stilled 16-cylinder 251 engine.



for good measure, Canada's second-largest city was Nirvana for Alcophiles.

Sadly, Montreal was also where old MLWs came to die. The dark forms of sidelined M630s and M636s brooded in the background as my friend Stan Smaill and I checked in at CP's St. Luc diesel shop and roundhouse on a September evening. In a quiet corner of the roundhouse sat M636 4705, awaiting the end. Its long hood had been removed, main generator extracted, and its big 16-cylinder 251 engine had been stripped to a bare block with virtually every removable component gone. Traction motors, handrails, window glass and number boards, headlights, ditch lights, air horns and bell; cab equipment, electrical parts, even door handles were gone. In the diesel shop, similar procedures were being performed on M630 4566, while in the high bay, C630 4501 was giving up traction motor combos. The silver lining to it all was evident in adjacent shop bays, where second-shift workers administered to the mechanical needs of RS18s, C424s, M630s, and M636s. Components and parts harvested from retired MLWs would help keep others on the road for months and years to come.

CP was squeezing every ounce of life from its aging MLWs. Defying doom-sayers and the effects of deferred maintenance, the 251-powered beasts soldiered on, handling some of the hottest assignments in the East, including manifests and intermodals to Saint John, N.B., Toronto, Windsor, Detroit, and Chicago. They worked south on the D&H to Binghamton, N.Y., and beyond, west along the north shore of Lake Superior to the Lakehead, and regularly proved their mettle — and the merit of their 75-mph gearing — on Montreal-to-Motown intermodals. Locomotives that made it back to St. Luc without self-destructing were patched up, fueled, watered, and promptly kicked back out the door.

Smaill and I had Morgan and Hastings on our minds as we pulled alongside CP M636 4718 and M630 4563 pumping air through No. 907's train in the departure yard at St. Luc in the cool darkness of a September eve. We'd encountered the two Big Ms earlier in the day racing through Saint-Clet with Toronto-St. Luc train 918, and there they were, all set to head back to Toronto having been at St. Luc for a few hours at most. If anything in railroading could come close to the soul-stirring drama of steam's last stand, these rough, tough, loud and gritty MLWs were the ticket. The air of anticipation and



**Quick turn-around: CP M636 4713 and M630 4563 wait for the light to depart St. Luc with Toronto-bound train 907 just hours after bringing No. 918 into town from Toronto.**

### THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

Montreal was inevitable. The ancestral home of Alco affiliate Montreal Locomotive Works and birthplace of thousands of Alco-design diesels, Montreal in 1993 held undisputed title as the Alco capital of North America. From the erecting floor of the famed Dickson Street works, established in east end Montreal in 1902 as the Locomotive & Machine Co. of Montreal, came legions of steam and diesel locomotives produced for Canada and the world. Though Bombardier built its last domestic 251-powered locomotive in

1984 and the Dickson Street plant was about to be permanently closed by current owner General Electric, Montreal-built diesels continued to congregate in their hometown. The last North American Class I railroads to operate Alco-powered locomotives, CN and CP maintained significant numbers of Montreal-built diesels, from little 1,000-hp S13 switchers and RS23 road switchers to four- and six-axle RS, Century, and M-Line models, to massive cowl-carbody Bombardier CN HR616s. With VIA's Alco 251-powered LRC locomotives thrown in

**The grand dame of all six-motor MLWs, one-of-a-kind RSD17 CP 8921 leads SD40-2 5575 and C424 4241 west of Cookshire, Que., with Saint John-St. Luc No. 281.**



sense of drama increased as the thin white needle on the brake-pipe pressure gauge in the cab of 4718 crept ever closer to 90 psi. An OK from the carman and a permissive signal to enter the main line at Ballantyne, and the show would be on.

We took up the chase west, catching up with the head end of 907 as the hogger widened out the throttle approaching Dorval.

By serendipitous circumstance the Alco safari was winding to a close in much the same manner as the work that had inspired it. Thirty-eight years earlier Morgan and Hastings had engaged in similar pursuit on this very stretch west of Montreal where the highway parallels the CN and CP main lines for more than 15 miles between Lachine and Vaudreuil. Morgan at the wheel of his '54 Ford, Hastings aiming his twin-lens Rolleiflex out the windshield, they paced trains of both railways, including CP G3g Pacific 2393 through Pointe Claire with an early morning commuter train as well as CN U-2-h Northern 6238 on an Extra East at Dorval. Windows down, conversation at a minimum, we kept pace with the big MLWs, exalting in the staccato racket of 16-cylinder 251s in full stride.

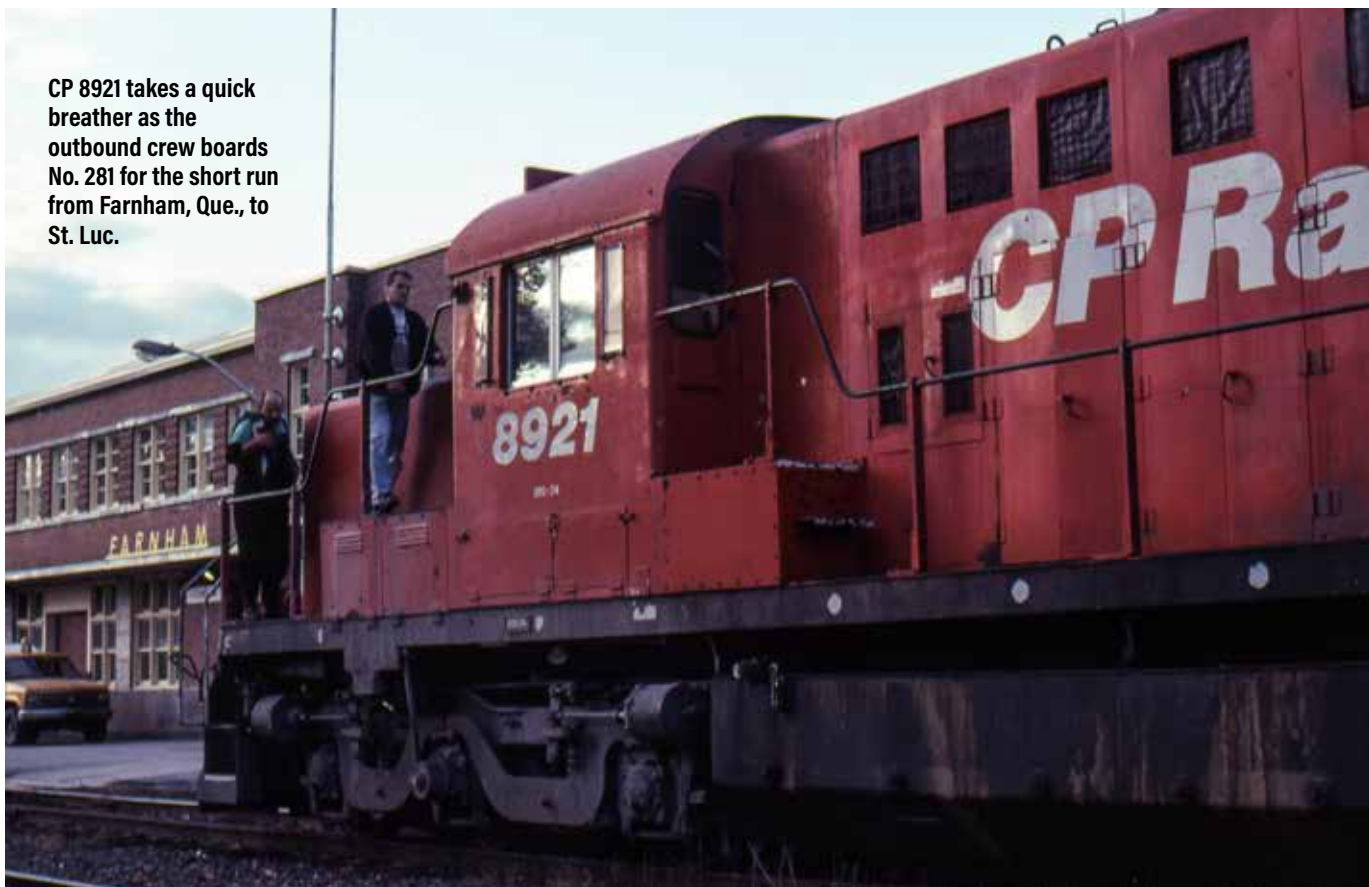
Silhouetted against the city lights and

briefly illuminated by platform lamps as they flashed through suburban stations at Pine Beach, Valois and Pointe Claire, Beaconsfield and Beaurepaire, the big Ms hammered westward with the speedometer pegged at the 50-mph track speed, accelerating to 55 at Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue. We stuck with them all the way to Vaudreuil, where the highway and railway diverged after crossing the Ottawa River. These were no frail machines hobbling into oblivion on their last legs. Sure, they were on borrowed time, but still earning their keep and putting on a magnificent performance in the process.

The spectacle of No. 907 hurrying through the night proved prelude to what would soon become the main event of our adventures in Montreal and environs. We had word that one-of-a-kind RSD17 CP 8921 had slipped the bonds of its regular transfer duties in the Montreal Terminals to work a trip to Saint John. Even as we raced along the Lakeshore in pursuit of the M636/M630 pair, the grand dame of all six-motor MLWs was headed back home on the point of train 281.

Built as an MLW demonstrator and dubbed "Empress of Agincourt" during her longtime assignment to transfer

**CP 8921 takes a quick breather as the outbound crew boards No. 281 for the short run from Farnham, Que., to St. Luc.**



**In the home stretch. Viewed from the cab of the trailing unit, CP M636s 4730 and 4740 hammer up the Niagara Escarpment approaching Guelph Jct., Ont., with Toronto-Windsor train 925.**

(which also included encounters with D&H 18 on No. 34, the *Laurentian*) pre-saged the safari, helped inspire the pilgrimage to Empalme, informed the sensibilities of an impressionable kid, and formed lasting friendships. The coming together of past, present, and personal might have been coincidental but there could be no more appropriate way to wind up the Safari than this.

### **BRING IT ON HOME**

Born of a spontaneous cold call from K.P.K. on a cool autumn afternoon, the Alco safari ultimately encompassed four trips totaling 42 days over nine months, racked up more than 14,500 miles in search of Alco and MLW diesels from coast to coast, tallied encounters with no fewer than 250 Alco, MLW, and Bombardier locomotives of 30 different models rostered by 30 railroads and 4 industrial operations, and produced seven serialized installments published in *Trains* magazine between August 1993 and May 1994. Featuring more than 40 photographs and some 20,000 words, the seven-part serialization Kevin afforded the story was a bold move at the time, unthinkable today.

It's been 30 years since I climbed down from the cab of CP M636 4730 at Orr's Lake, Ont., on an October 1993 afternoon, formally ending an odyssey that had traced a trail from Mexico to Maine and Montreal with a homecoming aboard a pair of never-say-die M636s. A full account of the safari could — and maybe should — fill a book. In the music business such an anniversary might be marked with a re-issue filled with remixes, alternate mixes, outtakes, and added tracks.

In this case there are no master tapes to mine or remix, but there's an untapped archive of Kodachromes stashed in steel Logan slide boxes and a stack of dogeared notebooks filled with scribbled notations recorded everywhere from the cab of a 1940-vintage HH660 to the cabin of a DC-9 to the cushions of a heavyweight observation car with an FPA4 peering through the back door. There are details between the storylines, outstanding tales left to tell.

Absent from the photographic record of this grand adventure is illustration of the final miles of the ride home. The cameras were set aside for the final act. By virtue of professional courtesy, the hand on the throttle as Extra 4730 West accelerated through Galt and took a run at Orr's Lake hill was mine. 📷

erstwhile Empress stretched her long legs on the main line.

Three guys squeezed into a Volkswagen racing Alcos along a Quebec highway — the essence of the situation recalled another time, another VW, another Quebec highway. Specifically, Dec. 30, 1967: Grant Will gripping the wheel of his venerable Beetle, Stan in the passenger seat, and me crammed in the back as we made a mad dash over the Mercier Bridge at LaSalle, Quebec, looking across at the parallel CP span and D&H No. 9, the *Montreal Limited*, soaring majestically over the icy, mist-en-shrouded waters of the St. Lawrence River behind a PA and two RS2s.

The first PA I'd seen in the flesh, D&H 19 was making its first trip since trading its red Santa Fe warbonnet for a miraculous rebirth in Champlain blue. The events of that unforgettable day

**The ammeter and speedometer on CP M636 4730 on the last stretch home.**

service in Toronto, CP 8921 gave us a run for our money as it led SD40-2 5575, C424 4241, and No. 281's mixed freight and intermodal tonnage over the Sherbrooke Sub west of Mégantic, Quebec. Phil Mason huddled in the back seat and Stan rode shotgun as we tore through the Eastern Townships in hot pursuit as the