

75 years
F



Citizens of the Erie shop town of Marion, Ohio, line up to tour the road's first FTs at an open house in fall 1944. Such events were rare in wartime.

Erie Railroad: John Long, Dan Biernacki collection

Marketing and delivering the

FT

EMD's support services and promotion efforts assured success for a quality product

By Preston Cook

When Electro-Motive had a completed set of FTs painted, tested, and ready for delivery to a customer, its involvement with the locomotives had just begun. A number of important tasks remained, including safe shipment to the customer, set-up and preparation of the locomotives for service, and technical support to assure their smooth integration into the railroad's motive-power fleet.

In the early 1940s, railroad personnel were primarily familiar with steam tech-

nology, and diesels were still something of a novelty. Many carriers that had already started to dieselize had done so with switchers that tended to be concentrated around the larger yards in major cities. New passenger diesels mostly operated point to point on dedicated runs, often with support from factory technicians who rode the trains. Consequently, prior to the widespread introduction of road freight diesels, service facilities for diesels tended to be few and far between.

In order to facilitate the delivery of

new FTs, and to help deal with any technical or shipment problems that might develop, EMD often had Service Technicians, sometimes referred to as "jockey" riders, accompany the units from EMD's La Grange (Ill.) plant to railroads that would take delivery outside the Chicago area. They would assist the railroads during the shipment, instructing personnel in how to make air hookups and properly set up the equipment, checking the mechanical condition of the locomotives, and dealing with any weather or

shipment problems. If new FTs had to move on several railroads to reach their owner, they were often shipped dead and drained. However, for railroads taking delivery in the Midwest, they were sometimes shipped operable.

Unlike later F units, the FT was designed with a cooling system that did not drain the radiators into an expansion tank when the prime mover was shut down. This required a greater degree of attention from railroad personnel than with later locomotives. Any FTs that were left idling in severe weather needed to have the cooling system radiator shutters and cooling fans (which could be de-clutched) set up to deal with low temperatures. Part of the function of the EMD riders was to notify railroad personnel who might not be familiar with diesels about these needs.

It was also common in the early 1940s for the builder to provide 100 percent coverage for the first runs of its locomotives. Service personnel would generally make at least one round trip on new road units, or ride switchers for their first day in service. By the late '40s, enough railroad personnel were familiar with diesels that the coverage for locomotives being shipped dead in train was generally dropped. However, the practice of providing first-run riders continued in some cases into the 1970s.

Many FT buyers had limited shop facilities for multiple-unit diesels. Unlike switchers, which could be serviced in a roundhouse stall and fueled from a tank truck at almost any location, three- and four-unit FT sets posed some logistical problems. In order to complete servicing quickly and efficiently, it was best to have a shop specifically set up for diesels, and few railroads had people on staff with the experience to design such facilities.

As a result, EMD offered supporting services to design diesel shops, and even published a catalog titled "Facilities" that showed sample layouts for small, medium, and large running-repair shops. For railroads wanting to design their own shops, EMD also provided a selection of "work sketches" that defined its recommended practices for the dimensions of doors, servicing ramps, and the layout of oil and water hydrants. There were also work sketches for tool cribs, work carts, access steps, and drop-down ramps for cleaning windshields.

TRAINING AND PUBLICATIONS

During the war years, it was impractical for railroads to send large numbers of



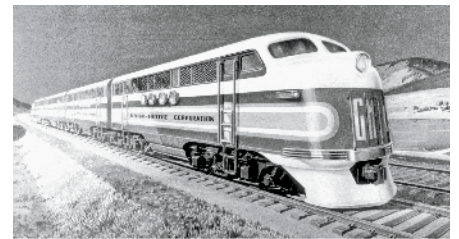
GM made extensive use of color advertising to market the FT. The ad campaigns were directed at the public through popular magazines, as well as to railroad officials through trade journals.

Preston Cook collection

employees to a locomotive builder's factory for training. This led to the practice of deploying EMD Field Instructors to railroad shops to teach the personnel there about the maintenance and operation of the new units.

It was common practice to use a B unit from the first set of FTs delivered to the railroad for instruction purposes. To facilitate this, the unit was often provided with color-coded piping systems and identification plates that explained the logic of the color-coding. This system was derived from the General Motors display of E4 and E6 passenger diesels at the 1939–40 New York World's Fair, where the piping systems on the glass-sided E units were similarly color-coded and labeled. Photographs taken of the first set of Erie FTs during an open house held to celebrate their delivery in Marion, Ohio, clearly show the color-coding of the piping in the B unit as well as the color identification plate [next page].

Prior to World War II, EMD took a page from the practices of the International Correspondence Schools in Scranton, Pa. The builder fitted out a coach as a traveling classroom, to be positioned at the railroad shops to provide on-site instruction facilities. ICS had used similar instruction cars for its steam-training

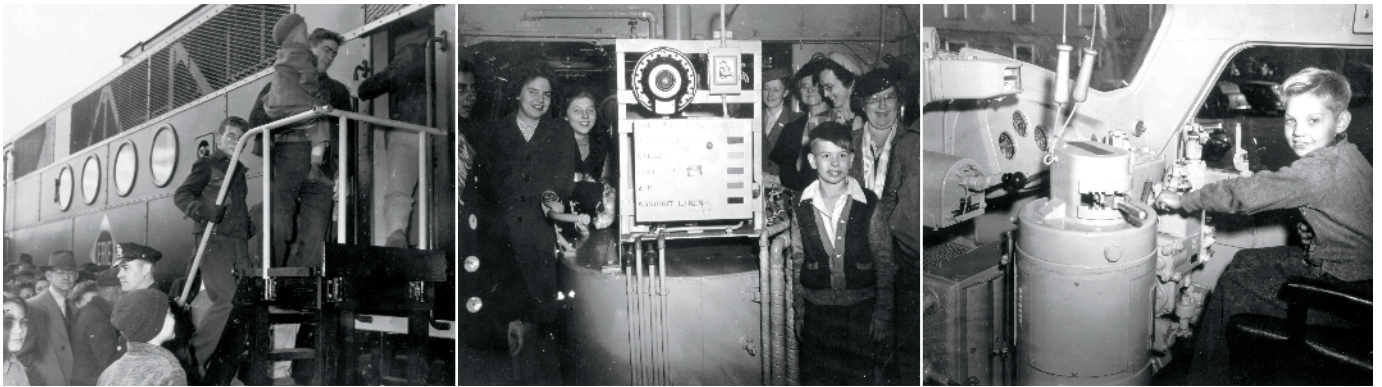


Many railroads that bought FTs did not have an established paint scheme for road diesels, so GM stylists offered possible designs. These renderings show two eye-catching FT demonstrator schemes that were not used.

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program since the early 1900s.

Electro-Motive established a Technical Publications group in La Grange to produce manuals and service literature to support its locomotive line. For the FTs, the operator's manuals were of particularly high quality, often provided with embossed and painted cover art depicting the corporate symbols of the railroad



Three photos from the Erie's 1944 open house in Marion capture (from left) visitors entering the FTs from a temporary stairway, a group posing inside a B unit, and a youngster in the engineer's seat. The internal systems on one of the B units were specially painted in different colors for use in training railroad personnel accustomed to steam engines; a panel (middle photo) explained what the various colors indicated.

Erie Railroad: John Long, Dan Biernacki collection

customer. In addition to the operator's manuals, EMD provided customer-specific parts books produced by its Parts Technical Group. In postwar years, the parts catalogs for the switchers, E and F units, and early GP and SD locomotives were grouped together as EMD Parts Catalog No. 90.

Supporting documentation for individual electrical and mechanical components was handled by a library of Maintenance Instructions, commonly referred to as MIs. This system was put in place around the time of the building of the first FTs for the Santa Fe, and is still practiced by the builder today. As Maintenance Instructions were updated, new

copies were sent out to the customers, often packaged with notices about the latest product improvements and parts availability. This wide-ranging family of support publications for EMD products helped to maintain customer satisfaction and brand identity.

ADVERTISING ON TWO FRONTS

The FT was promoted to the public by an extensive advertising campaign. Beginning with stylized artwork renderings in advertising that appeared during No. 103's tour, GM promoted the new locomotive with multi-page ads in *Railway Age* and other trade magazines. This was followed by wartime ads that were testimonials to the valuable service being provided by the FT on the Santa Fe and other western roads.

But in addition to the railroad trade press, GM also featured the FT in mass-market magazines like *Colliers* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. In the 1940s there was an element of glamour and style to GM advertising, and the public campaign was a perfect example of Electro-Motive founder Hal Hamilton's determination to take his firm's products over the heads of stodgy, steam-oriented railroad chief mechanical officers and appeal instead to railroad presidents, directors, stockholders, and even the public at large.

GM's corporate advertising department in Detroit handled EMD advertising until 1945. This was generally consistent with the combined marketing of GM diesel engines built by Electro-Motive, Cleveland Diesel, and Detroit Diesel under the sales management of "GM Diesel Power." During this period, it was common to see the products of several GM operations featured in a single advertisement. Electro-Motive locomotives could appear alongside images of Navy

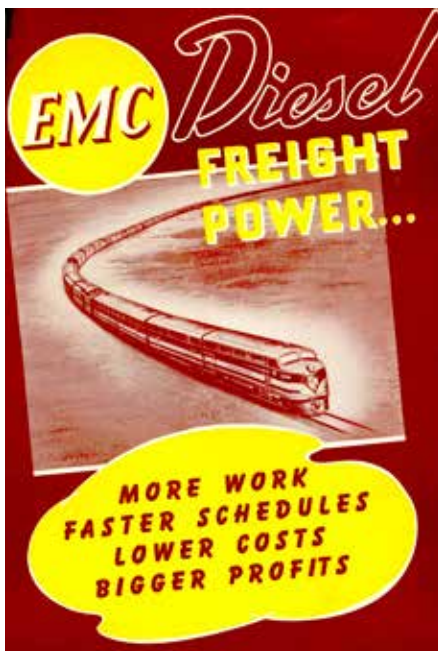
tugs (powered by Cleveland Diesel engines), 5-inch naval guns (made by Fisher Body), or 20mm anti-aircraft guns (Pontiac Motor Division).

Late in the war, the control of advertising was taken local, handled by the public relations staff at the EMD plant in La Grange, and placed through advertising agencies in Chicago and New York. In this period, and in the postwar era, EMD advertising tends to feature almost exclusively the division's own products, with relatively little mention of any other GM divisions.

STRONG PRODUCT SUPPORT

The FT was a pivotal product in EMD's development as a major diesel locomotive builder. In addition to being the first truly effective diesel road-freight locomotive on U.S. railroads, it solidified the flexible "building block" concept of using multiple-unit consists of diesels operated by dependable electric control systems. In the FT as well as in the early E units, Electro-Motive led the way to the effective and efficient use of diesels to accomplish a variety of tasks.

The experience with the FT contributed to the development of EMD's customer support systems into an efficient operation that was well positioned to deal with the much larger postwar market for diesel locomotives. Although the brief period of War Production Board restrictions in 1942-44 caused EMD to lose market share in the locomotive business, its wartime production of essential engines and equipment for defense projects resulted in a substantial expansion of its manufacturing and support capabilities. The organizational structure developed to support EMD products during the FT years effectively served the company's needs for many decades afterwards. ■



During the production run of the FT, EMC became EMD, and the responsibility for the development of advertising moved from General Motors Corp. to Electro-Motive.

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