

BIG BOY Steams Through Illinois

133 Feet, 1,200,000 pounds, 7,000 Horsepower, 100,000 people, In depth television coverage

By Norman Carlson



—Philip Weibler photo



Friday, July 26, 2019, will long be remembered by tens of thousands of people along Union Pacific's Milwaukee Division from Wadsworth, Illinois to Proviso Yard and on the Galena Division beyond to West Chicago. Three television stations, NBC, ABC and WGN, provided live streaming from helicopters so their viewers could follow the progress of the engine as it traversed Chicagoland. At the throttle was Ed Dickens, Manager of Heritage Operations, who started his career as a locomotive engineer in Denver. Even now as a member of management, he is proud to maintain his seniority in Denver.

When seeing Big Boy, the reaction on people's faces was one of complete awe. Many commented on felling vibrations in their feet from the weight of the engine as it approached. Smiling, waving, taking photos; generations of families stood trackside to see Big Boy pass. For both the people along the right of way, as well as the crew, for all concerned it was a sight to behold. If you do not think that the general population is not interested in railroads, please think again, there is nothing like a steam engine to bring people trackside!

While the financial people at UP, living up to their responsibilities, certainly must have questioned the time, effort and money expended in this program; in terms of public relations value, Big Boy has generated an incredible amount of goodwill for UP. What UP is doing is reconnecting with the general public and emphasizing the value of railroads to the United States' economy. Hopefully, other railroads will

▲ In October 1957, 4014 was in service at Cheyenne, Wyoming. —Bill Raia Collection, courtesy of Mike Raia

consider doing the same in some way or another.

From Saturday July 27th through Monday July 29th Big Boy was on display at UP's Larry S. Provo Training Center next to the West Chicago Metra station. It was estimated that 65,000 people visited the display. UP, Metra and other organizations were on-hand to pass out railroad safety literature, information and sell Big Boy merchandise. The display closed with a VIP reception for local political leaders, business people and friends of UP.

Big Boy's restoration is the core attraction of UP's celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the May 1869 completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. Executive supervision of the project was handed over to Scott Moore. We asked Scott for his thoughts about Big Boy:

"I love history, just as I know you and

your readers of *First & Fastest* do. When our team started planning the celebration commemorating the 150th anniversary of the transcontinental railroad's completion, we knew such a momentous moment in history needed to be celebrated in a big way. What bigger way is there than to bring a Big Boy back to life? It's been a true pleasure to hear rail fans of all generations and backgrounds relive their memories from days gone by, and to see a new generation impacted by that unique whistle blow. As you mentioned, the crowds at each stop are simply incredible.

When the transcontinental railroad was completed and the Golden Spike ceremoniously tapped into place, the nation forever changed. Travel from New York to San Francisco went from a life-threatening six-month journey to a much safer 10-day trip. Towns followed, and global trade

▼ Big Boy is arriving in Wadsworth on Friday, July 26, 2019. —Author's photo





▲ Big Boy is at Voltz Road in Northbrook. U.S. Highway 41 parallels the railroad between Gurnee and Highland Park. When seeing Big Boy people literally abandoned their cars along or in the northbound lanes. The southbound lanes were jammed with cars pacing the train. Thousands stood along the tracks. —Jennifer Nelson photo



▲ Big Boy crosses over Metra in Northbrook. This bridge, built by the C&NW, was made famous by Milwaukee Road publicity photos taken with this bridge as a prop. —Marshall W. Beecher photo

expanded. Even people's diets changed. This moment in time also launched the mission Union Pacific still believes today - the men and women of Union Pacific are dedicated to serve. The Great Race Across the Midwest, No. 4014's tour through Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin and Wyoming, was our way of extending the celebration and bringing history to the communities we are humbled to be a part of."

UP gave your Managing Editor the incredible honor and privilege of riding in Big Boy's cab, from Wadsworth to Des Plaines, Illinois, accompanied by Liisa Stark, Assistant Vice President Public Affairs - Northern Region. We watched in amazement at the size of the crowds beginning in Elmhurst and finishing in West Chicago wanting to see, for a brief moment, this magnificent steam locomotive thunder by. Liisa had the pleasure on more than one occasion to enjoy riding this train. She shared her thoughts with us.

"It was an honor celebrating the 150th anniversary of the transcontinental railroad's completion with communities, families, colleagues, history experts and rail aficionados as Big Boy No. 4014 made its Great Race Across the Midwest. From St. Paul to Duluth, Altoona to Butler, West Chicago to Rochelle and Des Moines to Omaha, tens of thousands of people joined Union Pacific to celebrate our great nation's history.

In West Chicago alone, over 65,000 people from every generation, and many states and countries, joined the celebration - a reminder of rail's long-standing influence in Chicago as North America's rail hub. I had the privilege of riding the train when it departed St. Paul and again when it arrived in West Chicago. I was joined by thousands of people along the rail lines, waiting to experience Big Boy's return to the rails as it whistled by. It was a fantastic experience, connecting the past and present to the many communities our trains run through and where our employees live and work."

Ed Dickens has become a wonderful and effective ambassador for the railroad. He patiently answered question after question during the display and VIP reception at West Chicago. A tall man, he kneels down when talking to very young children. His love of steam engines is palpable; it started when he was a child. Growing up in Denver, his Dad would take him trackside



▲ Ed Dickens at Wadsworth Road. —Bon French photo

to watch 844 roll by, planting the seeds of interest in steam locomotives. These observations of 844 led Ed to make his career choice to become a locomotive engineer.

His apprenticeship in operating and obtaining knowledge of steam locomotive's mechanical functions was gained during involvement with 2-foot and 3-foot gauge tourist railroad operations. While working at UP he took a leave of absence to join the team restoring Canadian Pacific's Royal Hudson for mainline operation. Tourist railroads and the Royal Hudson project brought knowledge of interfacing with the public as well. Obviously, UP management became aware of his talents and expertise. When Bob Kreuger, a member of UP steam team, left the company this provided Ed with the opportunity to pursue the job of his dreams. What follows is the result of a wonderful telephone conversation with Ed.

When approached in 2012 by a senior executive in UP's mechanical department about the Big Boy project, Ed's response was the project is the equivalent of



▲ Ted Schulte was the fireman on July 26. ▼ The engineer's position. —Two photos by the author



rebuilding two 844s. This executive, an expert on locomotives, knew exactly the scope and difficulty of the work.

Ed explained the scope of work was to essentially remanufacture a dual-engine locomotive was based, in part, by talking with and learning from the men who actually maintained Big Boys during the 1940s and 1950s. Well into their 80s and 90s these men loved to recall and share their experiences with a very willing student.

Another element of success would be a team with multi-discipline skills who were willing to work hard, endure long hours of tough labor and be precise in their workmanship. Welding, mechanical and fab-

rication skills were required along with ingenuity and creativity. To make sure that those applying for the steam team would fully understand the job requirements, Ed rewrote all of the job descriptions. The most critical attribute would be understanding that when something happened, it would be all hands-on deck. The team was handpicked based on these attributes.

At 133 feet in length, 1,200,000 pounds in weight and 7000 horsepower, 4014 is a self-propelled high-wide load traveling at speed over the railroad. There is no room for failure. IT HAS TO BE RIGHT! No one wants the embarrassment of tying up the railroad with that size and weight



▲ From a signal bridge Big Boy is seen passing adjacent to Tower B-17, the west end of Canadian Pacific's Bensenville Yard. —Mark Llanuza photo ▼ Leaving Proviso Yard after servicing and lunch, Big Boy entered the Galena Subdivision triple-track territory on Elmhurst's east side. About one mile later, Big Boy is west of the station. Huge crowds, rows deep, lined both sides of the railroad through Elmhurst. It was a sight to behold. —Mike Raia photo



▼ Our photographer, a high school freshman, is on the Chicago Great Western's former right-of-way in Lombard's east side, now a bicycle path. —Peter Busack photo



“dead in the water.” With a piece of machinery this complex anything can happen and the odds are something will.

To prevent failures, detailed planning, constant focus on the details of the remanufacturing process and mechanical skills are required. As can be expected with any restoration project surprises will happen with the usual impact to extending the work scope. As time went on the project became something of a “Perils of Pauline” experience; however, Ed and the team kept their noses to the grindstone and assured management that the deadlines would be met.

With a full set of drawings for the locomotive from the Union Pacific Historical Society's collection, the project moved forward. Reverse engineering was needed to prepare specifications for the fabrication of certain parts. One team member, an expert in computer-aided design, was able to prepare drawings from the reverse engineering. The locomotive was stripped of all parts down to its core components such as the boiler and drive wheels. Of all of the detailed piece parts of 4014 only the 16 main roller bearings on the drivers remain. Every other piece part on the engine is new.

As departure for Ogden, Utah, approached the work become more intense. Work was completed with little time to spare. The boiler was fired, steam pressure was building and the moment of truth was at hand. Slowly 4014 inched out of the shop with team members walking alongside checking every moving part that they could see. Everything worked! Now it was time to hit the road. What followed was a very interesting 60-mile initial journey for what in effect was a brand-new locomotive. What a great feeling of relief for all!

In the cab with Ed were Lance Fritz and Jack Koraleski. Jack spent his entire career at UP working through the ranks of the finance department to become the Chief Financial Officer, assuming the role of Executive Vice President of Marketing and Sales and then becoming the Chairman and Chief Executive immediately preceding Lance Fritz.

Prior to each trip there are extensive planning and physical inspections. Every bridge, curve, restriction and operating condition is considered. Physical inspections are made to assure that the locomotive will fit. Interface with the dispatchers

is critical as little or no disruption of normal operations is the goal. The steam team is either on board or driving parallel to the train to deal with any situation that develops. The logistics of operating Big Boy are considerable. It is very clear that Big Boy steaming across the country is due to the incredible support of Lance Fritz, Scott Moore and many others throughout the ranks of the Union Pacific management and operating personnel.

Ed feels that he has the best job at UP. He gets to talk with people about the Union Pacific and steam locomotives, especially Big Boy. He said that he gets “a crack in his voice” just talking about being at the throttle seeing the reaction of people as 4014 passes by them. It makes all the hard work and long hours worthwhile for him and his team. Having ridden behind Ed in 4014’s cab it is very easy to understand his pride and emotions.



▲ Big Boy arrives in West Chicago greeted by thousands of people from every vantage point. Helicopters chartered by three TV channels paced the train from Wadsworth. —Phil Weibler photo



▲ The July 26 trip is now complete. For the next three days Big Boy and certain cars were on display at the Provo Center. —Phil Weibler photo



▲ On Saturday, July 27 the Provo Center was a sea of people. Tens of thousands of people visited Big Boy in West Chicago. —Jennifer Nelson photo

On Monday, July 29 Big Boy headed west. ▶ In a classic Illinois farmland scene, Big Boy has just passed under Thrope Road west of Rochelle. So many people came to Rochelle that traffic was gridlocked and cell coverage collapsed. —Author’s photo





◀ Big Boy passes under the coal-
ing tower at Nelson. —Mark
Llanuza photo



▲ Small fixed-wing aircraft paced
the train across Northern Illinois
as seen here east of Morrison.
◀ Big Boy's visit to Illinois has
ended as the train leaves the
Mississippi River bridge and
enters Clinton, Iowa. —Two photos
Dan Cupper