THE WINTER WE WOULD RATHER FORGET

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The Blizzard of 2011 on February 1-2 was followed by more snow during the following week. By the end of winter Chicagoans had experienced the fourth consecutive winter with snows in excess of 50 inches. The prediction for the winter of 2011-2012 is that Chicago will have the worst winter weather in the country, something that many people are not looking forward to experiencing.

Bruce Moffat was out in the teeth of the blizzard on February 1-2. We are presenting some more of his photos. One person who loves winter is Mark Llanuza, and the worse the weather gets, the more Mark likes it. When the weather is really bad and others are not out and about, Mark loves to jump in his car and take photos to capture scenes that others miss.

There always has been a bit of mysticism about winter weather and photographing trains. In addition to scenes from 2011, we share some historic photos as well.

As Henry Cordell, the legendary Master Mechanic of the North Shore Line, always used to say, winter comes once a year, and the North Shore Line will be well prepared to battle the elements.

Previous page photo—In the teeth of the blizzard Mark was asked to record the scene at Metra’s storage yard in Elgin. Despite the intensity of the snow and wind, the crews were hard at work preparing the trains for their morning departures, departures that would not come on schedule on February 2. Due to the weight of the snow, a State of Emergency was declared in Lake, DuPage and Kane counties until highway crews could manage to clear the roads. Despite Metra’s efforts to place crews in motels near the rail yards, the train crew members could not get to their trains as vehicles could not get through the piled up snow. —Two photos Mark Llanuza
As dawn approached on February 10th, the Elgin yard looked more like a deep freeze than a railroad yard. Throughout February snow piled up. By month’s end, the record for the most snowfall during the month of February was established. Finally the sun broke through the clouds, but there was still plenty of snow on the ground. A Hiawatha Service train is approaching Western Avenue in Chicago. —Two photos Mark Llanuza
Despite the intensity of the storm, Bruce Moffat could not resist the temptation to record the events of the day. ■ A westbound train is approaching the California station on the Green (Lake Street) line. The rise in the background is the overpass at Rockwell Avenue, where the Union Pacific trains head for Global I and Canal Street intermodal yards (both facilities now closed) and eastern connections. ■ Looking east from Clinton and Lake, two Green Line trains are crossing over the approaches to Ogilvie Transportation Center, Chicago Union Station, and the South Branch of the Chicago River. ■ An Orange Line train is departing outbound from the Adams and Wabash station as it leaves the Loop for Midway Airport. —Three photos Bruce G. Moffat
A few hearty souls were out, bundled up to protect themselves as much as possible from the weather. In the middle of the day it was virtually like nightfall. A westbound Green Line train is headed for Harlem Avenue in Oak Park. Crossing over the Chicago River a northbound Brown Line train is headed for the Kimball Terminal at Lawrence Avenue in the Ravenswood neighborhood. A test train of the new 5000-series cars departs Adams and Wabash on an Evanston Express trip. —Three photos Bruce G. Moffat
The storm did a magnificent job of shutting down Chicago. These photos speak for themselves. ▲ Looking south from the Green Line platform at Ashland and Lake in the middle of the day on February 2. Over the expanse of approximately one-half mile, we see one person! Later in the evening Bruce went to State and Lake Streets. ▼ Looking west on Lake Street—nothing but snow. ▼ Looking south on State Street there are only two hearty souls and one vehicle. —Three photos Bruce G. Moffat
Chicago’s other legendary blizzard in modern times was the Blizzard of 1967, January 26-27, when 23 inches of snow fell. The days following the blizzard were bright and sunny. January 26th was a Thursday and the Illinois Central did not get the express tracks north of Kensington open until Saturday morning. A two-car South Shore train is leaving Randolph. You can probably guess who the photographer is. —Mark Llanuza photo

When the following winter began late in 1967 we were all very apprehensive. On December 26, 1967, an eastbound South Shore train is stopping at the Franklin Avenue station on 11th Street in Michigan City. There was snow on the ground, but the winter of 1967-68 was not as bad as the prior winter. —Marty Bernard photo

(Overleaf) The local freight to Kensington from Gary is being powered by the 803. The train is eastbound going under 130th Street, Chicago, on the Parsons Curve on December 27, 1980. —John Szwajkart photo
The winter of 1982-83 was the last stand for the “orange cars,” known among some of the line’s employees as the “orange crates.” That winter a westbound train is preparing to leave Hammond. The front pantograph on the lead car is raised as a sleet scraper. In February 1982 an eastbound train is approaching the 53rd Street station. The lead car, 22, was the only car to have the double sash windows placed in a “picture window” opening. These windows were ordered so there would be some ventilation in cars 23-28 and 100-111 after the picture windows were installed, but before the cars were air conditioned. In storage at Shops for years, the decision was made to install these windows in car 22 so they would be put to use. This also created a supply of single sash windows for the remaining cars. Never a penny was wasted on the South Shore Line. —Two photos Mark Llanusa Collection
Even though he lived on the Southeast Side of Chicago, Dick Lukin was a regular rider on the North Shore Line. The railroad was his transportation to the Illinois Electric Railway Museum, then located adjacent to Pettibone Yard. “Pup” 457 was on the south end of the string of locomotives east of the barn at Pettibone on January 29, 1955. Identical to North Shore’s other steeple-cabs, this locomotive was acquired in 1942 from the Arkansas Valley Interurban Railway. To maintain 80 mph operation with trolley poles, line crews of the North Shore Line were maintaining the overhead regardless of the weather. Line car 604 is in the clear at Northfield on January 22, 1958.

A three-car Milwaukee Limited is southbound on the Skokie Valley Route approaching the Northfield station at Willow Road on February 16, 1958. The area east of the tracks is now fully developed with commercial office buildings. One of those buildings just north of this location is where Dick’s office has been located for years.—Three photos Dick Lukin
Chicago Aurora & Elgin wood cars came from many sources, and some were rebuilt over the years. A four-car train is in storage at the Laramie Avenue Shops of the Chicago Transit Authority. Chronically short of cars, the CA&E leased a group of 12 wooden cars from the North Shore Line, ultimately buying the cars. We see two of them laying over at Wheaton Shops. Being the slowest cars on the railroad, they tended to be assigned to local trains scheduled at the end of the rush hours. Car 435 is a wood-bodied car with steel sheeting. The low winter sun certainly highlights the rivet pattern. This car was built by the Niles Car Company in 1906 as the parlor car Florence. It was rebuilt in 1923 into parlor-buffet car 601. Only six years later it was rebuilt as car 435 and reequipped to operate with the steel cars, thus being renumbered into the 400-series. The car was retired in 1954.

—Three photos Robert W. Gibson, George E. Kanary Collection
Built as an express motor in 1907, car 9 spent most of its life as a service car. Circa 1950 it was parked at Wheaton Shops.—Don MacBean photo

The last passenger operation on the CA&E was an Illini Railfan Club charter on December 7, 1958, a truly dank day. In retrospect the weather proved to be fitting for the occasion. Cars 319 and 320 were used. Collingbourne, one of the last photostops, is at the southern edge of Elgin. We are looking down from where The Milwaukee Road’s right-of-way crossed over the CA&E. The Fox River is close by on the left.—Dick Lukin photo
The Halsted Street Curve on the Met Main Line was the site of many photos, especially after some of the buildings were torn down in advance of constructing the Congress (Eisenhower) Expressway. In November 1951 a CA&E and an “L” train are traversing this “S” curve that crosses over Van Buren Street. — George E. Kanary Collection

A two-car train of the original series of 6000s is leaving the Francisco station on the Ravenswood Line in 1979. The winter of 1979-1980 was absolutely brutal, with a series of snow storms followed by sub-zero freezes that turned snow into blocks of ice, which had to be removed by hand from the CTA rights-of-way with picks and shovels. — Mark Llanuza Collection
The Skokie Swift has always been a good source of winter scenes on the CTA. Car 24 is departing the Dempster station on February 7, 1975. On the same day another single-unit car has just passed Skokie Shops and is approaching East Prairie Road on its northbound trip to Dempster Street. Yes, that is a Jitterbug in the background.—Two photos John Szwojkart
We finish our winter journey with a visit to the Kenosha Trolley as we take a ride on the “Chicago Car,” 4606. On December 4, 2010, a cold wind off of Lake Michigan did not deter our photographer.—William Raia photo

Three years earlier the car was also decorated for the holiday season. On December 18, 2007, the car is passing through the residential development that came with the advent of the trolleys, built on the former site of heavy industrial buildings.—Eric Bryant photo