

Union Pacific “Big Boy” #4014, 2023 Home Run Express.

- By Paul Becker

*I'll start with what's become my normal disclaimer, if you don't already know, I am interested in the history of locomotives as in when they were built, who has all owned them, what numbers they've had over the years and any type of a rebuilding that has happened. That being said, if I was able to find anything of interest, I've included it in this writing. You will find this information inside () and **bolded** to make it easier if you would like to skip over it.*

Friday, June 9, 2023

We started our trip fairly early Friday morning, we were on the road by 7:00am and heading west, well southwest technically, with our destination being North Platte, NE that night. UP #4014 and crew had already made the run to North Platte the day before and had Friday off so we took our time getting there. We headed to Valley, NE first to check out possible locations that we could photograph the train over the next two days on its way to Omaha, NE. From there we worked our way west on US-30 following the

UP mainline, checking out Fremont and other locations on our way. As we arrived at Cozad, NE we decided to get out and stretch a bit at the depot. This is a nice depot to photograph as well as the caboose that they have on display!



(This depot was built in 1925 after two previous depots burned down. In 1990 Union Pacific donated it and it was moved to its current location.)

(UP #25335, CA-6 Caboose. Built 4/59 as UP #2735. Retired 5/89.)



After a few minutes at the depot we were back in the truck and headed west once again.



Before we knew it we were in North Platte, NE by the Big Boy. I got out to get a few photos while it was on display where the North Platte depot once stood. After a few photos we went for supper and called it a day.

Saturday, June 10, 2023

Saturday morning we left town and went east to catch the train at Buttermilk curve just east of Brady, NE. While we waited there, we were able to see two coal trains, the first was a monster empty westbound! It was actually two empty trains put together and running as one train with 7 units and 295 cars total! Make up of the train was 2 units, 150 cars, 4 units, 145 cars and 1 single unit. You can watch a video of this train on our youtube channel by clicking here: <https://youtu.be/Unnx2go3Uuk>



Units on this train were:
(UP #7234 GE C44AC Built 9/99.) (UP #6763 GE C44AC Built 5/96.) (UP #7761 GE AC45CCTE Built 8/07.) (UP #2645 GE ET44AH Built 2015.) (UP #7470 GE AC45CCTE Built 4/11.) (UP #7326 GE C6044AC Built 4/98.) (UP #6625 GE C44AC Built 5/97.)

Next was a loaded eastbound coal train. This was led by UP #9070 and UP #6362 with UP #5303 as the rear DPU. You can watch this video too, just click here: <https://youtu.be/HLjZs8iatUc>

(UP #9070 EMD SD70AH Built 2017.) (UP #6362 GE C44AC Built 7/95 as SP #316.) (UP #5303 GE AC45CCTE Built 5/06.)



Next was the steam train! UP #4014 and UP #4015 eased through the large S curve with ease as they made their journey east. You can watch this video on our youtube channel as well by clicking here! https://youtu.be/D_M5ZJX5lgQ



(UP #4014 Alco 4-8-8-4 Built 12/1941.)
(UP #4015 EMD SD70M Built 6/2000.)

From here we jumped on I-80 until Cozad, NE to get around the train and the car traffic. When we got to Cozad, we found the train was stopped west of town with an

issue so we went to check it out. The train was stopped but not for long as it slowly started moving again. As they eased toward town, they met a westbound train led by UP #6425. **(UP #6425 GE C44AC Built 4/95 as SP #107.)**



The meet turned out for a great shot! I would've LOVED to have gotten it on video! After this unplanned stop we went back into Cozad to try and catch them coming into town but we didn't make it in time.

Luckily Cozad was a planned service stop so we could get around them again and wait on the east end of town. You can watch the video I took as the train eases out of Cozad, NE on our youtube channel by clicking here! <https://youtu.be/A3W5i6u92ek>



After we left Cozad, it took a little while but we were able to get around the train and catch them on the very west edge of Kearney, NE. I took another video there that you can watch on our youtube channel by clicking here! <https://youtu.be/RmMtdbQPvj4>



The train had another planned stop in Kearney so we used that opportunity to get around the train once again and wait for them on the west edge of Gibbon, NE. While we waited for them there, we caught an empty westbound coal train led by UP #8630. This was a surprise as it's wearing UP's newly adopted paint scheme. This new scheme

dropped the large US Flag on the long hood and the nose "wings" too.



**(UP #8630 EMD
SD70ACe Built 6/08.)
(UP #7698 GE
AC45CCTE Built
6/07.)**



Just ahead of the DPU UP #7372 we caught another surprise, a CNW rapid discharge coal hopper! These cars were delivered in 5/94 and the paint on this hopper seems to be holding up WAY better than the paint on UP #7372!

(UP #7372 GE AC45CCTE Built 4/09.)



Next was the Big Boy! The train came by us at speed and sounded really nice including a lot of nice whistle noise! You can watch this video on our youtube channel too by clicking here! <https://youtu.be/cazBn0EIBYo>

The train was going to be tying up for the night in the UP yard in Grand Island, NE so



we watched the train slowing down and ducking under the BNSF mainline once again giving us lots of nice whistle blasts! You can watch this video also on our youtube channel by clicking here! <https://youtu.be/l6-mi68Dops>

After the steam train tied up, we waited to see if there would be any other trains before we went for supper. We did see a couple BNSF loaded eastbound coal trains, one I did get a video of. You can watch it on our youtube channel by clicking here! <https://youtu.be/wSa3jCw1WjY>



(BNSF #6029 GE ES44AC Built 7/06.)
(BNSF #9158 EMD SD70ACe Built 1/08.)

We did see one UP westbound before we left the tracks and it had SIX units on it! Not only that but 3 of these units were GE AC6044CW's and the second unit was a former CNW locomotive!



**(UP #7039 GE
C6044AC Built
12/95.)
(UP #6732 GE
AC4400CW Built
12/94 as CNW
#8830.)**

**(UP #7034 GE
C6044AC Built
12/95.)
(UP #5387 GE
AC45CCTE Built
2/05.)**



**(UP #7117 GE
C44AC Built
7/98.)
(UP #7015 GE
C6044AC Built
11/95.)**

We ended the day on a high note though as this was the last train that we saw for the day!

Sunday, June 11, 2023

Sunday, the train was scheduled to leave Grand Island and arrive in Omaha that afternoon. We decided we'd sit and wait on the east side of Grand Island and chase them from there. While waiting for the Big Boy, we were able to catch a couple trains.



First, we saw an empty westbound coal train with UP #7976 leading with an SD70ACe and a GE as the rear DPU.

(UP #7976 GE AC45CCTE Built 5/12.) (UP #8329 EMD SD70ACe Built 2005.)

(UP #5270 GE AC45CCTE Built 2/06.)





A few minutes later, another westbound arrived but this time it was a grain train which was led by UP #8472.

(UP #8472 EMD SD70ACe Built 6/06.)
(UP #5974 GE AC4400CW Built 5/03.)

(UP #8757 EMD SD70ACe Built 9/12.)



Finally it was time for the Big Boy! Here's UP #4014 leaving Grand Island and heading east! After this spot we jumped in the truck and we were off!

The traffic really wasn't too bad at this point of the trip so we were able to get around them and catch the train again at Central City, NE. I ended up taking video here as there are a number of grade crossings in town which meant they had to blow the whistle

a lot coming through town! Again, you can watch this video on our youtube channel by clicking here! https://youtu.be/_IYMX1b3T-M



After Central City, we were again able to get around the train and catch them as they entered Duncan, NE. It was a bit cooler than normal for Nebraska in June so there was lots of steam too!

East of Duncan, track work had the line down to single track so with the train running on slow orders we once again we were able to get around them. The next town was Columbus, NE and also a scheduled service stop which made it possible for us to catch them entering downtown nice and slow.



Lots of people showed up and were waiting to see the train including this young future rail enthusiast!



As the train continued to ease into town I grabbed one last photo before we loaded up and were on the road again to get setup at our next spot.

After Columbus we drove to Fremont, NE and waited for the train there. Traffic was quite a bit lighter here so there wasn't a lot of activity except for one empty westbound coal train with a single UP GE on it.



(UP #2579 GE ET44AH Built 2015.)



There was a surprise mixed in with the other coal cars, another CNW aluminum rapid discharge hopper car! This one too, not looking too bad for it's age.



After more than an hour wait, the Big Boy arrived and put on another great show!

Valley, NE was going to be our next and last spot which isn't real far from Fremont so we were off once again. Once we got to Valley, we did find this single unit waiting near the UP Office for its next assignment.

**(UP #1132 EMD
GP60 Built 5/90
as Cotton Belt
#9711.)**



We did have time for lunch but soon after we could hear the steam whistle and then UP #4014 came into view! Since the engine glided into town with its train a bit slower, I was able to get a few nice photos here.



Since we were going home from Valley, here's my parting shot of the train with UP caboose #25809 on the rear of the train including some of the crew.

(UP #25809 Class CA-11 Caboose Built 5/79. Built as a "short body" caboose, this car has been modified by extending the body out to the end platforms around 2008/2009.)



My final shot of the trip was of the switchers at the Central Valley Ag grain elevator in Hinton, IA. This pair of ex CNW SD18's are used for loading grain cars. **(AGPX #6641 Built 12/59 as Southern SD24 #6950. Rebuilt as CNW SD18 #6641 11/80, then WSOR #6641.) (AGPX #1801 Built 10/59 as Southern SD24 #2503. Rebuilt as CNW SD18 #6623 11/80.)**

That concludes our trip, I hope you enjoyed it!

