

During the 1960's and 1970's, Perry and Jim used to take regular yearly trips (sometimes a couple trips a year) out west to railfan along the Union Pacific in Nebraska and Wyoming and the D&RGW Narrow Gauge in Colorado. A number of times after returning Jim would be getting one of the lists ready for mailing and would include a short write up of some of the places they went to and things that they saw while there. This hasn't been done for quite a while so we thought we'd try it again and see what you all thought.

Our vacation was to attend the paired convention of the Chicago & North Western and Union Pacific Historical Societies in Omaha, NE. Jim and Paul left a few days early to get some railfanning in before the convention started and met Perry at the convention.

Jim and I left Minnesota and went south picking up the Union Pacific mainline east of Carroll, IA. Taking US 30, we followed the mainline west catching a few trains along the way. Hearing rumors that the UP depot in Columbus, NE was going to be torn down,



we decided to take a look for ourselves. As you can see, the rumors are true. Some work gutting the building had already started and everything was fenced off. The building may already be gone as of this writing. Personally, this has always been one of my favorite UP depots outside of Cheyenne, WY.

The next day we continued west stopping at Lexington, NE when we saw an ex I&M Rail Link SD9 #612. This unit was built for Southern Pacific then went to MRL, I&M and now switches the elevator in town.



We photographed it as well as a UP eastbound doublestack lead by UP #8638 (SD70ACe).



Two UP GP38-2's sit at Lexington, NE for switching duties. The UP has a small yard and a few industries in town. UP #506 is from UP's original order of GP38-2's from 1974. UP #823 is of MoPac heritage.



We stopped at North Platte to see what motive power was at Bailey Yard and were not disappointed. Lots of big power from EMD and GE along with 3 newly rebuilt SD40-2's now classified as SD40N's.



We decided to set up along the tracks at Hershey, NE. This stretch of the UP is very busy as it is east of where the coal line splits off of the mainline to go to the Powder River Coal Basin in Wyoming. Here's a set of UP GE's westbound with a coal train. UP #5813 (C44ACCTE) and UP #6816 (C44AC)



Next we saw two SD70M's westbound with a train of auto racks. UP #4533 and #4934



We closed the day at Brule, NE just west of Ogallala, NE. Our first train there was a high priority doublestack with plenty of newer power from both GE and EMD!



Lastly was a westbound mixed freight with two SD70M's. UP #4425 and #4079

The next day, we split off of the UP main line to check out the coal lines of the BNSF and UP. We ended up catching a few BNSF trains at Morrill, NE

Here are BNSF #9259 and #9275, both SD70ACe's, bringing an empty coal train west for another loading of Wyoming coal.



This is the last train we watched at Morrill, NE and it was a big one power-wise. Eight units on the front (including a BNSF SD40-2) and 2 more units on the rear.



Next, we dropped just south of town to South Morrill, NE where UP has a yard with a number of tracks for coal trains and a locomotive facility too. We sat here for a couple hours watching UP coal trains both empty and loaded come in and leave the yard. Everything was nice and green here with all of the rain in the area the previous weeks. There was actually some local flooding too.

Above, we have an eastbound approaching the yard limits led by UP #5757 (C44ACCTE) The trailing unit is a patched C44AC UP# 6171. It was built as SP #131.

To the right we have UP #5778 (C44ACCTE) with UP #6198 (C44AC) leaving the yard westbound with an empty coal train.



If railfanning the UP's coal line, you will see a few UP SD70ACe's here and there but you will see more way more GE's. They are king of UP's coal lines.



Here we see another westbound coal train this time lead by UP #5586 (C44ACCTE) and UP #6910 (C4460AC), a former GE AC6000 leaving South Morrill yard.

At right, we have loads meeting empties just west of the South Morrill Yard. UP #6046 (C44ACCTE) and UP #5798 (C44ACCTE) meet an eastbound train led by UP #6670 (C44AC) and UP #7023 (C4460AC ex AC6000). UP #5799 (C44ACCTE) was the DPU on the eastbound.



County Road F parallels the entire UP yard giving you a decent look of trains and power in the yard. On the west end of the yard the road shifts to the north side of the tracks



and crosses the UP double track mainline and as well as the single track "Yoder" Branch Line using a nice wide overpass. A nice curve in both directions provides a nice spot for photos as we see here. UP #5849 (C44ACCTE) and UP #6683 round the curve with a westbound empty coal train just before dipping under the overpass.

UP #6016 (C44ACCTE) at right is the DPU on the same train seen above. The line to the left is the "Yoder" Branch Line. This is a very nice spot that we would've liked to have sat at longer but strong storms were moving in so maybe next time.





After leaving South Morrill, NE we headed southwest to Cheyenne, WY. As usual the UP was running plenty of trains here too. UP #5845 (C44ACCTE) and UP #5319 (C45ACCTE) ease into the yard with an eastbound mixed freight approaching the

Cheyenne Depot to change crews. We made a quick run out to Perkins on Sherman Hill. We were waiting for a train but it was getting dark, so I took a picture of the water tank with the moon instead of a train.



The next day we started back east again following US 30. We came upon a long hopper train that was stopped just east of Dix, NE. We counted the cars and power as we got ahead of it.



The train was 163 cars total! It had 3 GE's up front, 114 cars, 3 more GE's and the remaining 49 cars. Units on the front were UP#6953 (C4460AC), UP #7515 (C45ACCTE) and an unidentified C45ACCTE. The middle units were SP #335 (AC4400) UP #6865 (C44AC) and UP #5943 (C44ACCTE).

Both pictures, above and at right, were taken at "Point of Rocks" west of Sidney, NE.





These pictures are still at “Point of Rocks” west of Sidney, NE. This is one of only 10 AC4400’s still in full SP paint at this time with the rest all being patched or completely repainted.



Our next stop was UP’s yard at Sidney, NE where we found two more UP rebuilt SD40-2’s now SD40N’s.



UP #1601(SD40N) is an original UP unit being built 3/1977 as UP SD40-2 #3369.

UP #1591(SD40N) is also an original UP unit being built 4/1977 as UP SD40-2 #3383.



We continued east seeing a few trains along the way and stopped in Ogallala, NE after spotting something through the buildings.



Sitting in the siding was a long mixed freight with UP #2556, a new C45AH not even a month old, leading along with nine other units.

Power on this train in order were;

UP #2556 (C45AH built 5/2015;

UP #5456 (C45ACCTE);

UP #4031 (SD70M);

UP #6482 (C44AC);

UP #9405 (C41-8);

UPY #1438 (MP15AC) ex SP #2709;

UPY #1425 (MP15AC) ex MILW RD #465, SOO #1531, UP #1425;

UPY #1435 (MP15AC) ex SP #2706;

UPY #1363 (MP15DC) ex MP #1363, UP #1363;

UPY #1373 (MP15DC) ex MP #1373, UP #1373.

UP #9405 (C41-8) has a nose plaque commemorating the J.C. Kenefick Safety Award given to Don Englert of Green River, WY.



Our last railfan stop before going to Omaha for the convention was Sutherland, NE. We sat in a park trackside and watched a number of trains roll by. By this time of day, the sun was better for westbound trains and that's what we have at left. UP #7241(C44AC) and UP #7035 (C4460AC) duck under the pedestrian bridge with a long solid train of hopper cars at Sutherland, NE.



He's got everything from signals to models to tools to photos to timetables. It's quite the collection!



The convention hotel was a block away from the corporate offices of Union Pacific. We checked out their company store located on the first floor as well as the cafeteria. Both are open to the public and have some nice merchandise as well as really good food!

One of the convention tours was of Bill Wimmer's museum, J-B Railroad Museum in Plattsmouth, NE. He has LOTS of pieces of railroad memorabilia that he's been collecting for decades.

These two photos show a couple of his larger items.





CNW #8646 (C44-9W) was built 1/1994 and CNW #8701 (C44-9W) was built 4/1994 and still show off the last C&NW paint scheme.



UP #8897 (SD70AH) and UP #1995 (SD70ACe) (C&NW Heritage Unit) were also on display out front of the Durham Museum in Downtown Omaha. The Museum is UP's former passenger station and has been beautifully restored and makes for a nice backdrop for pictures too. The museum has some nicely restored UP equipment inside too.

Union Pacific brought in some equipment to display in honor of the CNWHS convention too. The last two locomotives in full C&NW paint were available for pictures along with the CNW Heritage unit and a brand new UP SD70AH outside of the Durham Museum. The shot at left was taken from the 10th Street Bridge.



The "Dynamic Duo" as they are referred to are the only CNW units left that have not been patched or completely repainted. It's nice to see this paint scheme still roaming the UP system.





We were lucky enough to catch a freight train pass the locomotives on display. At left UP #4984 (SD70M), UP #1878 (SD40N) and UP #4698 (SD70M) are westbound through Omaha, NE with a mixed freight.

Of interest on this train was UP #1878, another newly rebuilt SD40-2 now SD40N. It was built 4/1975 as UP #3300 and repainted into a special United Way paint scheme 8/1994. It was rebuilt and renumbered to #1878 sometime this past fall.



On our way back to the hotel, we saw UP #1209 (GP39-2) and UPY #591(GP15-1) eastbound in downtown Omaha, NE with a mixed freight. UP #1209 is of MKT heritage and UPY #591 is of MoPac heritage.

Another one of the bus tours took us up to the new Kennifick Park which is connected to the Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha, NE. UP moved Big Boy #4023 and Centennial #6900 from outside the Durham Museum to this location in March 2005.





Both locomotives overlook I80 crossing the Missouri River and can be seen from the interstate even at night.

The BNSF yard is visible from Kennifick park too. With the help of my telephoto lens, I was able to get this photo of BNSF #2572 (GP35u) and BNSF #3121 (GP50) idling in the yard.



We had a great time railfanning the UP and attending the CNWHS/UPHS convention. We appreciate and thank all of our customers for their patience and understanding which allows us to take some time off from time to time.

Photos and write up by Paul Becker.