

retirements

ANACONDA - More than 40 years ago Leo V. 'Skipper' Kelly, right, hired-out as a stenographer clerk for the Butte, Anaconda and Pacific Railway.

At that time the B. A & P. president and general manager was Harry Galloway. Galloway's successor was Robert Brooks. Fred Bellinger headed the organization from 1951 to 1958, when Bill Conroy took over. Kelly moved up when Conroy retired in 1973.

When he retires July 1 Kelly brings to a close a long career with an outfit he proudly refers to as "the biggest little railroad in the world."

Kelly was asked to recall some memorable events that affected the railroad over the years.

"Probably the most traumatic adjustment we had to make was the loss of ore movement from the Butte mines to the smelter in November of 1964. In early 1957 the B. A & P. acquired 200 new solid-bottom ore cars. There are 145 of these cars in leased service throughout the country.

"However, the loss of such a volume of traffic between Butte and Anaconda was a heavy blow to us. At that time we had 1400 cars in service, and we numbered eight or nine locals a day.

"Another significant change was the earlier switch from steam to electric locomotive power. It was an end of an era when the railroad went to the electrics in 1912."

At that time the romance of oldtimers with the steam locomotive was not necessarily shared by company accountants. The B. A & P. was the first major railroad in the United States to embark on so revolutionary a solution to reduce operating costs. The substitution of then-cheap electricity for coal resulted in a savings of over \$150,000 a year in coal alone. (Times do change, don't they!)

Kelly continues. "In 1952 when our diesel locomotives 101 and 102 first made their appearance, it seemed like the death knell was soon to be heard for the electrics. But in mid-1967 we still had 28 electrics in operation - including three tractor trucks, known then as 'cow-and-calf' combinations. Yes, the electrics served us well."

As on many short-haul railroads, the passenger train service has had its day. "Passenger service between Butte and Anaconda was discontinued on April 15, 1955. The culprit? Not the diesels, but the automobile," he recalls.

"In 1978 we leased 60 sulfuric acid cars from the Union Tank Car Co. They've helped us sustain our traffic flow.

"This is a family-oriented railroad," he says proudly. "Over the years we've had grandparents, parents and children working with us.

"They came, liked the job and their fellow-workers. They stayed. Our people are skilled craftsmen at their trade. They like the work and they do a good job.

"I'll miss them."

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