

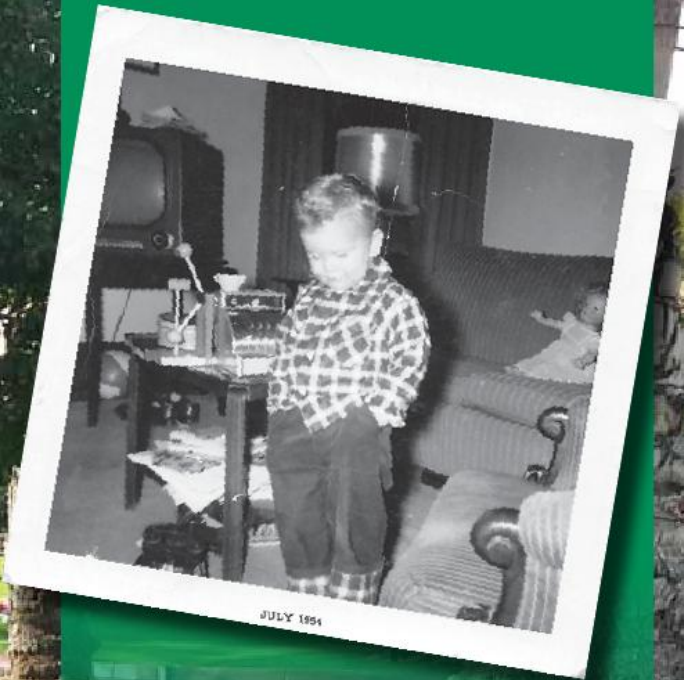
Steve

40+
YEARS OF
RAILROADING

Steve Behn was born in New Richmond, Wisconsin on October 15, 1951, the second child of Charles and Alice Behn. Although he was born in Wisconsin, his parents actually lived an hour away in Minneapolis and he lived there until he was five. In 1954, the family moved to Duluth where his mother worked for the advertising and public relations firm Westmoreland Larson and Hill and his father worked in various sales fields from insurance to home alarm systems.

● One of Steve's early childhood memories was being a proud five-year-old owner of a barely used steel pedal car. His mother bought it for him because when she was growing up "all the rich kids" had them. Even at that age it was clear he was destined for a career in equipment management. His mother was a bit disappointed that all Steve seemed to want to do with it was wash it in the driveway!

Steve's maternal grandfather, Chris Karlsrud, worked for the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway (Omaha Road) in various



Behn

positions, eventually becoming the Station Agent in New Richmond. So much freight and passengers moved by rail in those days, Station Agents were looked up to and well respected especially in small towns. Steve's grandparents lived very close to the depot and Steve remembers lying in bed and hearing the whistles and sounds of the passing trains and often walking to work with his grandfather when they visited. "He knew most of the train crews and I remember they would take me up in the locomotives while the train was in the station."

Steve's grandfather suffered a stroke in 1959, the same year his parents were divorced. He was forced into early retirement but went on to teach telegraphy at the Duluth Area Vocational school. He had a profound impact on Steve's life at a time when his own father's daily involvement diminished and was more limited to family outings including winter ski trips and fishing and water skiing at the cabin. Steve was only 12 when his grandfather passed away but Steve quickly became the man of the house for his mother, sister, and grandmother.



One of Steve's early childhood memories was being a proud five-year-old owner of a barely used steel pedal car.



UL - Steve with his grandfather, sister, and his dog "Queenie".

UR - Steve's grandfather (second from left) with a train crew at a stop in New Richmond.

LL - Steve proudly wearing his cub scout uniform and waving the flag.

LR - Charles Behn served in the Coast Guard during WWII.

The (I) Wonder (Why I'm in School) Years

Steve attended Duluth Central High School, graduating in 1969. Following in his sister Cheryl's (aka Shari) footsteps through all the same schools was not always easy for Steve. "She was a model student and me, not so much. Since our last name was somewhat unusual, I was generally greeted each new school year with 'are you Shari's brother?' This would often turn into 'you are NOT Shari's brother!!' by year's end." Apparently not having learned this lesson in high school, he also followed Shari to the University of Minnesota Duluth where she had breezed through in 4 years and embarked on a long teaching career in the Duluth schools. After two years of taking general education courses, with the enthusiastic support academic counselors' office, Steve decided to move on.

Steve worked several jobs during and following college including stints as a gas station attendant (when attendants still checked oil, tires and washed windows in addition to pumping the gas) and loading trucks for a frozen pizza company. He also worked as a courier for the advertising and public relations firm

where his mother worked. In those pre-internet days, news releases, photos and stories had to be hand delivered to the various TV and radio stations.

The First Railroad Years

Steve's first railroad job was a summer position on the Duluth Winnipeg and Pacific Railway. His worked on the ballast gang along with a crew laying ribbon rail between Warroad and International Falls, Minnesota. Walking alongside the ballast cars, opening the doors, dumping the ballast on the skeleton track behind the rail gang left him in a perpetual cloud of dust. When the empty ballast cars were returned at the end of the day, the crew had to close the doors using a 6' lining bar, crushing granite in the doors in the process. Showers at the end of the day were a bucket of cold water in the shower car or a dip in 50 degree Lake of the Woods. "We did have our own cook and dining car. One evening we had pork chops for dinner and on some days it was necessary to take bag lunches if we were going to be a long distance from the cook car. Lunch the next day was a pork

"One evening we had pork chops for dinner... Lunch the next day was a pork chop sandwich... complete with the bone between 2 slices of bread!"



“Copy 3 Carlton” When copying train orders, the dispatcher would instruct the operator how many copies to make (using carbon paper) which the operator would repeat back. It was generally 3 copies, one for the conductor, one for the engineer and one station copy.

chop sandwich....complete with the bone between 2 slices of bread!” The work was hard and the hours were long, but by the end of the summer, Steve was in the best shape of his life.

Steve had several friends working for the railroad as tower operators. After visiting them on the job a few times, he quickly discovered that he wanted to work for the railroad too. Towers once served as the operational hubs throughout the rail system, and kept the railroad moving. He jumped at the chance when the former BN offered him a position in September of 1972. As a train order operator working in various towers across Minnesota and northern Wisconsin, Steve copied train orders and handed them up to passing trains, switched trains from track to track aligning them to reach their ultimate destination. While the telegraph was no longer required and phones had replaced them for official communications, the telegraph keys remained in the towers and were used by some who still knew Morse code.

“I remember a visit to the railroad museum in Duluth not long after the towers began closing in the late 70’s and early 80’s and seeing many of the phones, telegraph keys, train order hoops and equipment I had been using being displayed and thinking, geez, I am not that old.” Having lived through a part of it, Steve was pleased when the new BNSF headquarters in Fort Worth, constructed in 1997, was designed to include the history of the railroad. For Steve, the museum in the welcome center, the paintings, and documents displayed throughout the building were always a joy to share with visitors.

The Post-Tower Years

In 1976, the towers were beginning to be phased out, but Steve landed a promotion to Train Dispatcher in Superior, Wisconsin. The selection process included a 100 question written exam and an all-day oral examination so it was a proud moment to pass and be promoted. Dispatching trains was still being done with pen and paper with very few automated systems in place at the time. After his promotion, Steve’s grandmother Laura told him how proud his grandfather would have been as he felt train dispatchers were such an integral part of railroad operations. It was a job he thoroughly enjoyed and looks back on now as one of his favorites

Steve was promoted in 1979 to his first exempt position as Supervisor Train and Power Operations in the Operations Control Center in St Paul, Minnesota. The control center was commonly referred to as the “War Room”. Each locomotive, train symbol, and caboose was depicted by a magnet. These magnets were used on a 55 foot metal board containing a schematic of the railroad. The railroad was divided into four territories, each with its own Supervisor. The “trains” were pushed across the railroad from territory to territory with magnets added and removed as locomotive and consists changed.



New acquaintances Laurie and Steve in 1980

The Happily Ever After Years

The move to St. Paul proved to be a good one for Steve, not just because of the job, but because he met his future wife Laurie there in 1980. Laurie was a speech pathologist teaching in the junior and senior high schools in

After only a year in Overland Park, Steve and Laurie moved to Fort Worth, Texas where Steve became the Supervisor of Coal and Taconite Operations working for Don Hogenson.

nearby Elk River. They met at a party at her house where she was living with two other teachers. Steve was invited by one of her roommates who knew him from Duluth. While Laurie didn't know Steve before the party, she'd heard about him and was intrigued. Apparently, Steve had dated a girl in Duluth that was now dating a guy she worked with. Laurie was also looking forward to meeting the girl's brother who had also been invited. While it sounds a bit convoluted, a singles party was just the 80s version of "match.com".

The party was a success and Laurie got calls from both the girl's brother and Steve after the party. Steve was the first to call and ask her out. They were married in 1982 in St Paul. Laurie went back to teaching but that was short lived due to a series of successive moves that made maintaining her teaching credentials and meeting state specific requirements unrealistic.

The Overland Park to Fort Worth and Back Again Years

The Operations Control Center was moved from St Paul to Overland Park, Kansas in 1983 and the low tech magnets were replaced by a computerized system known as CAPMAC (Computer Aided Power Management and Control). Gone were the

days when locomotives went "missing" because they had fallen off the board into the cuff of the Supervisor's pants.

After only a year in Overland Park, Steve and Laurie moved to Fort Worth, Texas where Steve became the Supervisor of Coal and Taconite Operations working for Don Hogenson. There were a number of utility people that Steve met in those early years that were also still around when he retired. Dennis Wanless was one of the very first people he talked to. Nancy Chen, Ron Boro, and Bob Sarvela (then with MP&L) were also folks he met early on. "It was a pleasure to work with them over the years and be a part of the growth of an industry that became such an integral part of our company and nation."

In 1986, the Coal and Taconite Operations Group was split from Coal Marketing and reported to Transportation in Overland Park so Steve and Laurie moved back to Kansas. Laurie was "retired" from teaching but was exploring other options. Much to Steve's delight, one of these options was cooking classes. Steve worked shift work in the control center which included a 4am to noon shift on the weekends. He was promoted to Manager North Corridor and Taconite Operations in 1988.

The Innovative Years

In 1993 the Overland Park offices were consolidated with the

Procurement

Cost containment in the utility industry has caused power companies to reconsider their conventional ways of conducting business. They must now consider all options to reduce costs and redeploy capital. In response to these changes facing utilities, the NexGen Coal Services Group provides a range of services

Operations

encompassing coal procurement, coal transportation, and coal yard operations which can include owning and operating your coal facilities.

Transportation

nexgen

NexGen Coal Services, Ltd.
5251 DTC Parkway, Suite 800
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
Tel. (303) 751-9230
www.NexgenCoalServices.com

THE NEXGEN DIFFERENCE



“Life slows down?” Between the cabin in Wisconsin (left), a new toy for the lake (right), at home in Texas (above) and a couple of time shares (in Palm Springs below) life for Steve and Laurie seems as busy as ever.

main headquarters in Fort Worth and the Behns moved from Overland Park to Fort Worth for the final time. Steve held various positions within the coal group for the next decade from Supervisor to Manager to Director with increasing responsibilities and staff.

There were many changes over the years from regulatory, to mechanical, to operations, to being a part of that was exciting. The Staggers Act of 1980 ending tariffs and allowing contracts, the advent of aluminum railcars, the 1991 adoption of the 286k gross weight on rail standard, AC locomotives and distributed power were all huge drivers to railroad operations. Steve was also involved with a variety of tests and “experiments” over the years including the painting of aluminum railcars in an effort to reduce freezing; 5 pack coal cars designed to reduce in-train forces; the Trough Train; lighter composite materials; coal car covers; ECP brakes; 315k gross weight on rail; and expansion of the joint line. These all presented challenges and allowed Steve to work with a varied group of internal departments, vendors and customers.

One of the unique challenges Steve faced was that much of the equipment he was tasked with managing was not even owned by the BNSF but by its utility customers. The contract provisions specific to each customer had to be considered so a close relationship with Coal Marketing was essential. Although it wasn't always the case organizationally, Steve felt that the best results were achieved when his group was physically located with the Coal Marketing Group while structurally reporting to the operational part of the railroad.

Steve was proudest of the work he did on enhancing the NCTA coal

forecasting process and developing the coal forecasting tool. He was respected by the utility customers because of the effort he made to balancing and communicating their requirements as well as the railroads.

For many years, Steve promoted a spare car “pooling” plan that had the potential for huge productivity gains for both the railroads and car owners if properly managed. By pooling the spares, the overall spare requirement would be lower, saving participating utilities capital and lowering storage costs. Operationally, the ability to take the first available car rather than a specific customer car as a spare would have helped to maximize train size and reduce train dwell times. While the idea had some enthusiastic support among private car owners, others were less trusting of the railroad and he was never able to successfully implement the idea. Other innovative ideas, specifically some stockpile management plans, did get put in place.



The Retirement Years

Steve retired from the BNSF in June of 2013 and is thoroughly enjoying it. Steve says, “It is not so much having time to do more, as it is to have time to enjoy more what you are doing.”

Steve and Laurie are splitting their summer between Texas and their cabin in Wisconsin. This also allowed them to spend more time with Steve's 92 year old mother who still lived in Duluth. Unfortunately she passed away July 21, 2014. All of us at the NCTA send our thoughts and prayers to the Behn family during this difficult time.

Steve's family has owned property on Pine Lake in New Auburn, Wisconsin since the 1920's after his paternal grandfather came across the lake while fishing with friends. His grandmother fell in love



with the lake when he took her there so they purchased some property and built a small cabin using used lumber from a sugar beet factory. Through the years the families grew and by the mid-80s, the small cabin and the sparse few warm months in northern Wisconsin were being shared with 16 aunts, uncles, and cousins. In 1987, Steve and Laurie teamed up with Shari and her husband, Allan, to build a new cabin on property next to the original. Shari who retired from teaching in 2001, passed away in 2004 from breast cancer, so it has been mostly just Steve and Laurie since then.

Unable to use the cabin very often while working full time, it was a high priority in retirement. They purchased a pontoon boat the first month and enjoy touring around the lake in the evenings. They have renewed friendships with people on the lake, some of which Steve has known since childhood, and are getting more involved in the Pine Lake Association's planned group activities such as pontoon floats,

picnics, lunches and joint efforts to repair and maintain common areas, roads and paths.

Laurie is very active in genealogy research. She has traced her ancestry to the Mayflower and currently serves as the state historian for the Society of Mayflower Descendants in the State of Texas. In this role, she helps others to confirm their lineage and file the necessary paperwork to become part of the Society. She is also involved in the Daughters of the American Revolution both at the chapter and state level.

While Laurie works on genealogy, Steve works in the yard and enjoys the fruits of his labor on the back patio with his morning coffee and newspaper. Travel plans include a return to their honeymoon spot in Hawaii next year and relaxing at their time shares in Cancun and Palm Springs. Steve highly recommends retirement life and after focusing for forty years on keeping things moving, he truly appreciates the chance to stop and smell the roses. ▲

*working
night
& day*

*to deliver **premium value**
for our business partners*

WESTMORELAND COAL COMPANY

INNOVATION EXPERIENCE COMMITMENT INTEGRITY

Contact us at: (303) 922-6463 email: sales@westmoreland.com www.westmoreland.com