

# Midwest Central Railroad

# ORDER BOARD

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*Distributed to Friends and Members of the MCRR*

March 2006

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## FROM THE SHOP By Greg Roth

### “To the Future...and Beyond” — Part 1 and Part 2

This adventure “From the Shop” is a two part episodic tale. The first part finds our Herculean volunteers taking on that constant battle of steam... maintenance. This is the shorter of the two parts and victory is required for the near future. Part two involves a more prolonged struggle of time, research, and funding.

#### Part 1 – The Future

#### Engine #6: Ready for Future Rendezvous

As the engines rest comfortably in the shop this winter, their accumulated battle fatigue is our first concern. In regard to running steam locomotives, current Board member Dave Osier once told me “If it ain’t broke... just wait.” This seems to be one of the most accurate truisms of the organization. Each winter provides all volunteers the opportunity to work with parts of each engine they may not be familiar with and glean knowledge for future struggles. Last season left both Engines #6 and #9 gasping for breath, conditions that had to be addressed this winter. Neither was a “new” condition and the dice had been rolled too many times. It was time for the two Cast Iron Warriors to benefit from winter down time.

At the end of last season Engine #6 was having difficulty keeping steam pressure up the hill into the North Depot. Thinking they were more capable than the previous fireman, many Firemen tried to coax the 6, but in the end, all failed. As all good Firemen do, me included, we came to the conclusion it had to be the engine!

Recently Engine 6 has been parked on the pit with three areas of weariness addressed. First was the problem of maintaining steam pressure. It is impossible for a steam engine to go far into the future without ample pressure. It simply does not happen. Too much loss of pressure and time stands still, or at least the train does. To address this problem the fuel line from the fuel bunker to the burner was pulled and scrutinized. The

main problem then became obvious. The 6 could not keep steam pressure up because it was not getting enough fuel to the burner. The Galactic Warrior was not receiving enough space rations to continue the voyage. Fortunately, this condition had a simple solution and was corrected rather quickly.

A new, bigger fuel line was run to the burner basically taking the diameter of the pipe from the restricted dime size to the fuller quarter size. This year the 6 should be able to sustain pressure and climb the hill into the depot as if it were reaching for the new millennium. With this change the Firemen may get the feeling of weightlessness.

The second journey took the crew to the cab of Engine 6. This required a long overdue general tightening of every bolt and nut. A seemingly simple task in a normal environment, it was no simple space walk. As projects usually go, for each bolt that was tightened two or more had to be removed for access. At one point the Engineer’s seat and the engine’s radio were removed. Under the carefully guided hands of two explorers, bolts were secured and nuts tightened. Many trips were taken to the bolt room since some bolts needed replacing, some bolts and screws were missing, and some bolts were presenting themselves through the outer skin of the craft with no space anchor (an Earth “nut”). It is hard to believe, even for the ones that did the work, but the cab is now much more rigid. A new future dawns, one free of numerous creaks and groans of the past.

The third task on Engine 6 involved the brakes. This task wore the patience of the volunteers. First was the environment. The work was done in the cab, an area that had exhausted the efforts of the work crew. The main operation was to stop the leaks in the brakes in the cab. A seemingly straightforward and uncomplicated assignment it turned into a laborious task. The removal of the air lines went smooth and most leaks were sealed

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The Midwest Central Railroad was incorporated in 1960 as a non-profit educational organization, dedicated to the preservation and operation of narrow gauge steam powered railroad equipment. Donations of cash or materials are welcomed and are tax-deductible under section 501(c)3 of the federal tax code.

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**If you have articles,  
photographs, or story  
ideas for the next issue  
of the Order Board,  
please send them to the  
Editor or to MCRR at  
P.O. Box 102,  
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with floating grace. Then came the next maneuver, the reintegration of the brake lines.

Viewing the lines as a pre-bent tubular puzzle, two volunteer futurists began to “explore the possibilities” and even though no credit was given the task was accomplished. With one explorer strategically positioned in the cab and the other precariously stationed on the walkway by the boiler, copper tubes were positioned, repositioned, repositioned, and then re-repositioned until they all fit. Presently the brakes hold a constant air pressure and the future is secure.

More is still to be done but Engine 6 has benefited from the off-season. Onto Engine #9.

### Engine #9 and the Galactic Task

Engine #9 has a problem that is not new but has been problematic for years. The throttle on the #9 has leaked for many seasons. The response over the years has been the quick, and temporary, fix. This type of response caused the vessel to be docked each year for repairs. This year Commander (Earth: “President”) Crull has taken on this mission with a new flight plan. The mission is to machine the throttle seats and create a new spool value.

To give a person an appreciation for the depths this mission will go, it has taken weeks to set up the project and set up is still not complete. Due to the shape and size of the throttle it cannot simply be put in a mill or drill press. The stand for the throttle has had to be crafted with special attention given to positioning. So far the Commander has enlisted the assistance of “weak minds and strong backs” to maneuver the throttle in and out of its future work station numerous times. I must admit to being one of these recruits since I did not have a strong enough mind to say “No!” Due to heightened security the entire mission plan has not been divulged but everyone knows it is a crucial and involved mission that will accomplish great ends only after great effort.

Joining the delegation on this mission is Assistant Commander Jesse VanWinkle. Assistant Commander VanWinkle disclosed that the throttle spool value will have to be made. The difficulty of this aspect of the mission is the precise dimensions of the spool. The dimensions will have to exactly match those of the throttle seats. Both seats at each end of the throttle spool have to close at the exact same time or it will leak. This, of course, is the very problem the mission is to correct. It is obvious all phases of this mission are critical. The difficulty is that the success of the operation will not be known until future testing has been undertaken. Assistant Commander VanWinkle summed up the difficulty this project presents by saying; Quote “Too bad Lima is out of business.” End quote. We wish the Commander and all his assistants good luck in the future!

Part Two... And Beyond!

Part Two of this two part episodic adventure takes us to a more distant time. One estimated at a decade.

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Envision this... an engine running on the MCRR tracks where she has not felt the rails beneath her wheels for 20 years. As the engine circles the grounds she is switched over track that was not in existence the last time she circled. She enters a South Station that is foreign in color, materials, and size. To her it is a new South Station. Not one made of wood...leaning, yellow, and black inside, but one that is spacious and red on the exterior. As she passes the crowds gathered to see her, she gives smooth and almost silent "chug-chugs" in recognition of their admiration.

This may sound like part of a fairy tale from a storybook but is the realistic envisioned aspiration of the volunteers to have Engine #2 on the tracks and pulling trains once more. Engine #2 ran at MCRR from the early 1970s to approximately 1987 at which time it was completely torn down. For pictures of Engine #2 in operation at MCRR see the "Engines" section of our web site.

Engine #2 is a Baldwin 20 ton, 2-6-0 Mogul. Originally the #2 was purchased by the New Berlin and Winfield Railroad in 1902 for work in an agricultural area. In 1917 it was purchased by the Argent Lumber Company in South Carolina where it hauled logs to a mill. After the company closed the locomotive was purchased by MCRR and rebuilt by the early 1970s to become the railroad's main road engine.

Recently years of talking about restoring Engine #2 has turned from words into action. The frame members have been sandblasted and are visible to inspection. So far everything appears to be in good condition. The cylinders have been bored and the saddle has been brought back to the shop. The next few steps involve machining all the frame binders to a good fit and assembling the frame. Currently the frame rests upon a disassembled "Van Winkle" – a track tamping device created by its namesake – and several hours have been spent removing stubborn bolts and nuts with combinations of heat, hammers, chisels, grinders, cheater bars, and old fashion "oomph."

The wheels will probably be the first monumental stage. As with every project the #2 restoration is dependent on two main variables: 1) funding, and 2) volunteers. It has been estimated that new tires, crankpins,

and quartering will cost \$25,000. This is a crude estimate since no-one knows exactly what is needed at this early point in the restoration. Another monumental stage will be the boiler. All belief is that #2 will require a new boiler which is an expensive part of any restoration.

It is thought the restoration of Engine #2 will take approximately \$250,000 to \$300,000 and take from 5 to 15 years. Each of these estimates are dependent on funding and volunteer hours.

Due to the fact my family and I attended the Old Threshers Reunion in the years the #2 operated I am sure I have seen it run but I can not remember the engine. Being able to work on it now and imagine what it will be like to operate her is very exciting. When I first started volunteering at MCRR Engine #9 was being finished from its partial restoration. I was able to help with the end of that project and I can still remember the first day it steamed onto the tracks. The level of excitement then was personally very high. Seeing Engine #2 run would have to be exponentially greater.

If you would like to see Engine #2 run again please do whatever you can to make this dream a reality.

- \* Spread the word about the restoration! The more people that know about this project the more will get involved and donate money or time
- \* Volunteer hours at the railroad for the restoration! Any amount of time helps. If you can help out for a day or can do more, it all moves us closer to our goal.
- \* Make a monetary donation to the railroad earmarked for the #2! A vital aspect of this project is funding. Restoring a steam locomotive is an expensive enterprise and any donation will make the dream that much closer to reality.

The Midwest Central Railroad has made great things happen. From The Show, to Ghost Train, to The Polar Express, we, as a volunteer organization with all members having ownership in all events, have made great strides to guarantee the preservation of steam railroading. If we all work together, this project will become yet another epic accomplishment.

To help, contact the MCRR at (319) 385-2912. Please leave a message if no one answers. Or visit our web site and email us. Our website is [www.mcrr.org](http://www.mcrr.org) and click on the link "Contact Us."

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Starting March 17, there will be a web survey for McMillan Park and the Old Threshers Grounds. I ask everyone in our organization to PLEASE go on-line and fill out this survey. This is our organization's chance to be heard on the new design for the grounds. This survey is being conducted by Iowa State University and is being done as part of the Mt. Pleasant Community LINC(S) (Long-range Initiative for New Collaborative Success) Project. It does not matter if you don't live in Mt. Pleasant. As a member and volunteer for our organization you are a primary user of the grounds.

The survey will be at: <http://www.iaext.iastate.edu/McMillan.html>

Thanks!!  
Matt Crull  
President, Midwest Central Railroad

Midwest Central Railroad  
P.O. Box 102  
Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641

### MCRR- 2006

#### Dates of Operation

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Fourth of July

Old Threshers Reunion  
*August 31 - September 4*

Ghost Train  
*October 14, 20, 21, 27 & 28*  
*6-10 p.m.*

Polar Express  
*November 25 & 26*  
*December 1, 2, & 3*

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