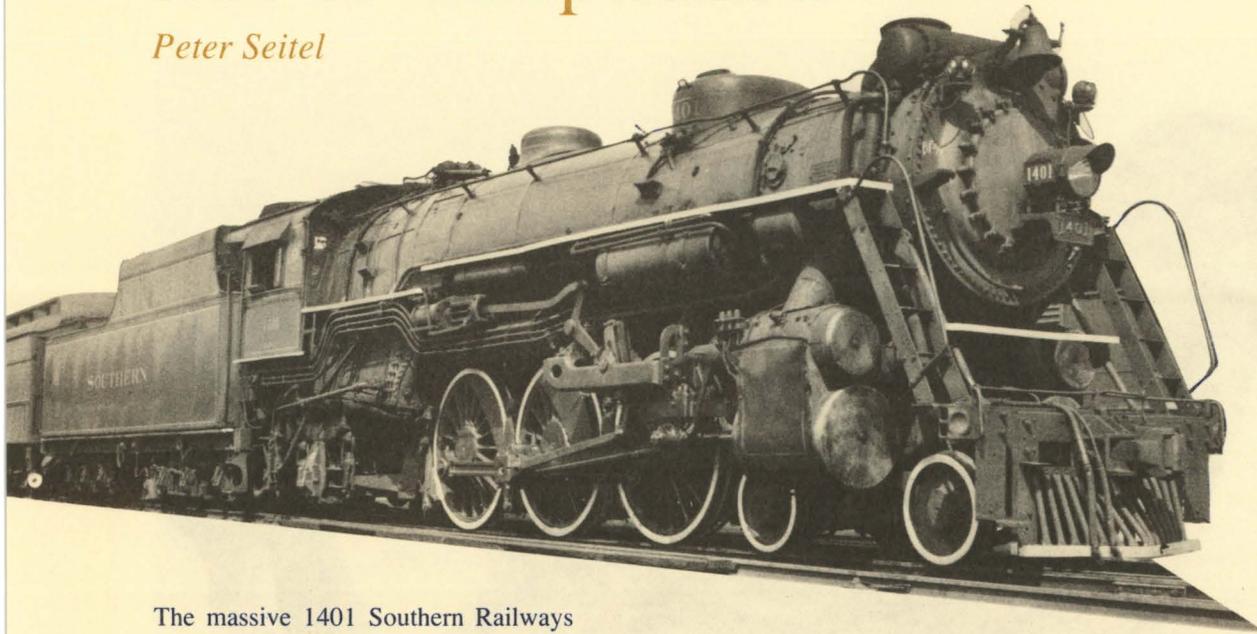


# The Railroad Workers' Demonstration in the Hall Of Transportation

Peter Seitel



The massive 1401 Southern Railways steam locomotive stands in the Hall of Transportation like a metallic, fire-breathing mastodon of ages past. Mammoth, ponderous, yet beautifully designed and intricately crafted, the 1401 awes most visitors. It dominates the hall to such a degree that one finds it difficult to relate the engine to anything else. It stands alone.

Try to imagine the 1401 in its workaday world. High-wheeled locomotives such as this one pulled fast freight and passenger cars. See the train roll through the American landscape. Her steam whistle cracks shrilly through a pine forest, black smoke billows and bends low for a moment as the engine emerges from a mountain tunnel. A mile of cars rides between rounder and caboose, moving along straight as a lance through midwestern wheat prairies. The 1401 still dominates the scene.

Try relating the 1401 to one of the legendary trains of American railroad lore: Orange Blossom Special, Panama Limited, Silver Meteor, Wabash Cannonball. Put Casey Jones at the throttle; Jimmie Rodgers, the yodeling brakeman, in the caboose. The track and tunnel they traverse was laid and sweated over by John Henry and his like. Perhaps "on that train was Hobo John/He's a good old hobo but he's dead and gone."

The iron and steel of the 1401 still resist: massive, functional, obdurantly *present*, the engine will not easily yield its meaning. Perhaps even the rich folklore of the American railroad cannot make the 1401 into a symbol of striving for success, loneliness away from home, or the inevitability of good-byes. It is too big and too imposing for that.

Fortunately, there is another way to grasp the human significance of the 1401. Constructed by human knowledge,

*Railroad lore, some of which Southern Railway's super 1401 locomotive evokes, is discussed in the Transportation Hall of the National Museum of History and Technology, the engine's permanent home.*

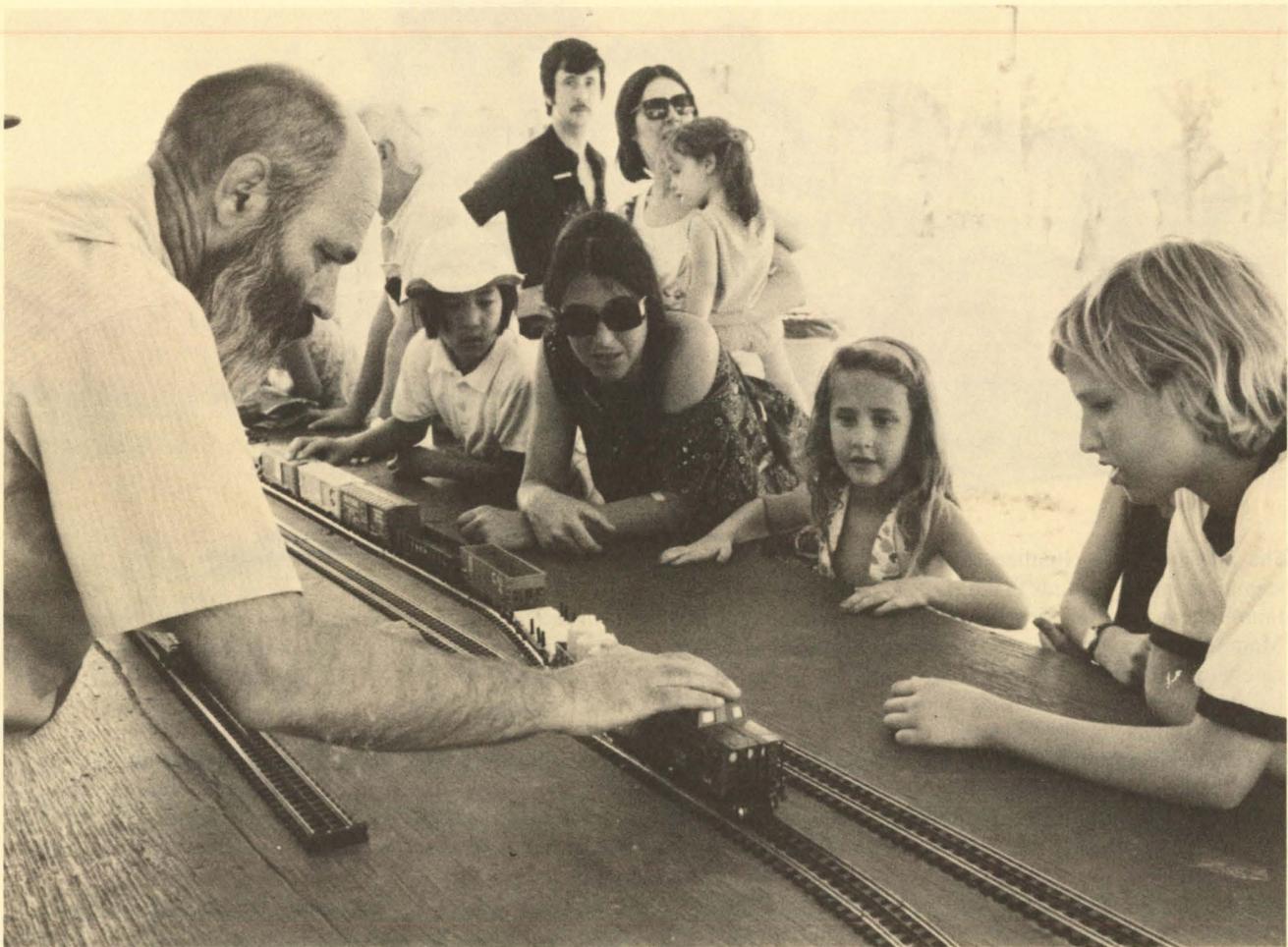
handicraft, and power, the 1401 was put through her paces, administered to, and repaired by railroad workers. We can approach her through the hands and eyes of the men who fired her up, held the throttle, and ran the business of the freight and passenger cars.

For railroad men such as Lloyd Hardy, Glenn Lee, Roy Reed, and Frank Turley (Festival participants who work in and around Cumberland, Md.), engines like the 1401 are a part of everyday life. They work with her diesel-powered descendants as they pick up, sort out, and deliver passengers and freight to their proper destinations. Listen to the human dimensions as Lloyd Hardy describes and demonstrates what it is like to fire locomotives like the 1401 from the left side of the engine's cabin and then to stand over on the right as an engineer. Watch and listen to other members of the crew explain the complex—and occasionally humorous—hand signals which guided the engineer's movements. The trainmen will also show you the everyday routines of assembling a train and starting it on its run.

The engineer and locomotive are a vital aspect of railroad operations. But the principal business of the railroad is moving people and goods. This is done by the fine art of switching: moving single cars, strings of cars, and whole trains from track to track to collect, separate, and deliver freight. An O-gauge train model designed and built by John Dohanec (St. Louis, Mo.) will assist trainmen in demonstrating various kinds of switches for passenger and freight runs. It can also show how a freight classification yard works.

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*Engineers and trainmen will share recollections and use the model trains and freight yard to demonstrate the art of switching single cars, strings of cars, and whole trains from track to track to collect, separate, and deliver freight.*

Railroad stories are legion. Railroad workers—like most occupational groups—entertain one another in off-duty hours with reminiscences and tales of fellow workers, clever brakemen, unruly passengers, unscheduled stops, and other happenings that make up a railroader's world.

The giant 1401 will be made understandable for museum visitors by the workers who performed such tasks on an everyday basis. Railroad workers are the interpretive link between museum visitors and railroad equipment, between past and present technologies, between the lore and the business of railroading. Armed with their knowledge, their skills, and their wit, they are an equal match for the 1401.

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