

Reprinted from the Bangor Daily News, Wednesday, October 1, 1980

Railroad Cartoonist is Known to Select Few!

The anonymous chalk artist who draws the American railroad industry's most widely recognized cartoon character is a local celebrity at the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis even if his identity remains a mystery outside of Missouri.

The man who has been drawing the sleepy Mexican-American cartoon figure known as "Herby" on the sides of railroad cars for more than 25 years is known even to high ranking railroad executives in the St. Louis area.

W. Crimm, superintendent of the Missouri Pacific Railroad Co., said he is personally acquainted with Herby's creator, a carman on the Terminal Railroad. Crimm was responding to a recent story about "Herby" in the Bangor Daily News.

"Herby is a sleepy sombrero-topped character always depicted in the same pose, lounging under a palm tree, with the name "Herby" and the date inscribed beneath the art work. The character has been drawn on countless thousands of railroad freight cars which have appeared on every standard gauge Western Hemisphere railroad line from Mexico City to Fairbanks, Alaska.

"Herby" frequently appears on boxcars on the Bangor and Aroostook and Maine Central Railroads in Maine. The cars have all been in the St. Louis area before traveling to Maine.

Crimm said that although the artist still wishes to remain anonymous his creation has been an inspiration to the Missouri Pacific Railroad Co. "We on the St. Louis Terminal Division have been using "Herby" as a promotional device in

connection with our safety program for five or six years," the railroad superintendent said.

The cartoon character appears regularly in the railroad's publication "The Defensive Line" to offer "The Wisdom of Herby." Safety hints like "Wealth is 10 fingers, the same amount of toes... and keeping them" appear frequently in the safety department publication.

The railroad publication noted in 1978 that "Herby is becoming as much a part of rail lore as steam engines, pocket watches and Casey Jones...(Even) others of the general public who have knowledge of him spend their unchosen time at occupied railroad crossings 'reading' boxcars while the train passes" looking for the cartoon character.

The St. Louis carman is able to draw the cartoon character in three strokes, say railroaders who have seen him at work.

The Wisdom of Herby



You
Made It
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