Alaskan train still survives

United Press International

FAIRBANKS, Alaska — There's the Tokyo-Osaka "bullet train," the trans-Siberian Express, the Santa Fe Super Chief, and then there's the Alaska Railroad's "Moose Gooser."

The 34-mile-an hour passenger train that runs between Anchorage and Fairbanks is a tribute to American engineering ingenuity and as Alaskan as sourdough bread.

Building the 470.3 mile Seward-Fairbanks railroad 55 years ago took brains, determination and about 60 million 1923 dollars shelled out by a benevolent federal government. Keeping it running has required the kind of bull-headed Alaska cussedness that's capable of ignoring 165-degree weather changes.

Riding the Anchorage-Fairbanks Moose Gooser is a travel experience rarely equaled for scenic beauty and fun.

Officially, the 30-year-old blue and gold "streamliner" is named the AuRoRa after the Northern Lights. But ever since its first run on Oct. 18, 1947, it's been known locally as the "Moose Gooser" because of the tragic, one-sided confrontation that always occurs during the winter

The Moose Gooser often brings out the sick, the ailing, and the dead from such way stations as Hurricane Gulch, Windy, Honolulu, Chultina, Talkeetna and Curry.

when the moose insist on using the plowed tracks as their personal property and challenge the diesels for supremacy.

An Alaska Railroad spokesman said as many as 350 moose a year are killed by trains along the route.

Occasionally there's a dome car on the 10½ hour daylight runs linking the two cities along with the chair cars, diner and a bar car.

Expect no starched linen table cloths or the heavyweight silverware and chinaware that were traditional on trains like the 20th Century Limited, the Empire Builder or the City of San Francisco. On the Moose Gooser, teen-age girls — some still wearing teeth straighteners — have replaced waiters in their white uniforms.

Here the uniforms are blue jeans, red bandanas and T-shirts advertising the Alaska Railroad. The only similarity between the two dining cars are the prices which are typically Alaskan: high.

But expect no average picture post card scenery either aboard the Moose Gooser. Suffice to say that no other 10½ hours of cushioned travel offers such a spectrum of wild beauty.

For a $56 fare, the AuRoRa offers summer passengers:

—A breath-inhaling view of Mount McKinley's 20,300-foot summit, the highest in the northern hemisphere, which, along with the other peaks in the Alaska Range, will do nicely as a reasonable facsimile of the Himalayas.

—Breath-exhaling views of some of the whitest bodies ever to wear bikinis at Nancy Lake where the Alaskans swim and strive for suntans during their short summer.

—The distinction of crossing the Continental Divide at its lowest altitude between Alaska and Mexico. Broad Pass is only 2,363 feet high.

—Picture window views of salmon leaping completely out of the water during their oneway trip to the spawning beds, along with fishermen proudly holding catches aloft as the train passes

—Moose grazing in alpine meadows instead of cows grazing in fenced in pastures.

—Dense forests of whitebarked birches and aspens, the albinos of Alaska, and acres of yardstick-high fireweed, as royal a purple as ever graced a King's robe.

—The unique experience of riding on gypsum-treated bearings; a special requirement of the Alaska Railroad because of the 70 degrees below zero weather which freezes ordinary wheel bearings during the winter.

—The screech of steel grinding against steel as the track corkscrews along the meandering Susitima and Nenana rivers with curves so tight the engineer can often watch the rear brakeman without hardly turning his head.

—Probably the greatest cross section of Americans ever collected on one train — miners and millionaires, backpackers and Eskimos, tourists and Indians, scientists and bureaucrats, fishermen, hunters, the old, the young and the newly married. The Moose Gooser often brings out the sick, the ailing, and the dead from such way stations as Hurricane Gulch, Windy, Honolulu, Chultina, Talkeetna and Curry.

Brakeman Richard Palmer said at one time the entire area was dependent upon the train.

"Until the new highway was built between Anchorage and Fairbanks we were the only link these people had with the outside world. We brought in the materials for their cabins, delivered their groceries and carried them to town.

"I've seen the baggage car loaded with moose carcasses," he said. "We carry the hunters out on the morning run, and the afternoon train would pick them and their kill up and bring them back to Fairbanks or Anchorage with the winter's meat supply. We were more like a mobile butcher shop than a passenger train."

The Alaska Railroad started as a private venture in 1903 and ended up broke a few months later. Washington stepped in and finally completed the line from Seward to Fairbanks after eight years of some

of the toughest construction work ever attempted. President Harding in one of his last official acts before his death drove the final, golden spike on July 15, 1923, at North Nenana.

The Alaska Railroad has rarely shown a profit due to the one-way haul — all the revenue-paying freight moves from the tidewater ports inland, but little is shipped from the interior to the coast. The biggest profits came during construction of the oil pipe line from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez, but last year officials said the line was in the red again with a deficit of more than $1 million.

The exorbitant maintenance costs and man-suffering task of keeping the line running during the winter have made profits almost impossible.

"At Healy, I've seen it get down to 70 below zero with a 20-mile-an-hour wind blowing," said Palmer, who, like just about every other

On the Moose Gooser, teen-age girls— some still wearing teeth straighteners — have replaced waiters in white uniforms.

brakeman and conductor, has suffered frostbite at one time or another.

"The wheels would freeze to the tracks, and we'd have to take the freight trains out in batches of 10 cars to break the wheels loose. Maintaining air pressure in the braking system was always a problem during the winter, and you rarely got more than 20 pounds with a wide-open compressor."

The extreme cold caused rails to buckle, the roadbed to "heave," and the seepage in the tunnels would form icicles so big the crews would have to precede the trains through the tunnels and knock them down.

There are always snow removal problems in the winter, slides, washouts, spring floods, 95-degree summer heat and equipment failures to plague the crews. Just about every challenge in running a railroad can be found along the Alaska Railroad's right of way.

And all but one of these problems has been solved. That one is how to convince the moose population that the trains have priority, and train whistles are warning signals, not challenges to do battle.

"But," said Palmer with a sad shake of his head, "moose are like some humans; they just never seem to learn."

Siamese twin to live, doctor says

United Press International

DALLAS — A pediatric surgeon said a 2½-month-old Siamese twin girl whose sister died shortly after they were separated has a "100 percent" chance of survival.

Dr. Ted Votteler, who was in charge of the complicated surgery July 26 at Children's Medical Center, said there is no reason the baby "won't do extremely well."

The baby has never been identified by the hospital, other than as "baby a." She was taken home by her parents Friday after doctors said she was developing normally.

Votteler said the baby will not require a special diet, her weight is normal and she is eating properly. The child weighed 7 pounds and 3 ounces when discharged.

Farms 'play' missile game

United Press International

DENVER — The president of the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union said Saturday it was ridiculous that thousands of acres of prime agricultural land, much of it in northeastern Colorado, may be lost because of a proposed new missile system.

The MX, Milestone II, would use a type of shell-game tactic to deceive military opponents. The proposed system would employ methods involving a series of underground tunnels with the missiles moving constantly through them.

Eight eastern Colorado counties are under consideration for the new missile system. Other states being considered are California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Kansas, Nebraska and Texas.

One proposal calls for many underground silos to be built with some containing "dummy" missiles while others contain nuclear armaments.

"On first impression, many people in that area (of northeast Colorado) think this is some type of science fiction story," said John Stencel, head of the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union. "But apparently the military is taking this proposal very seriously.

"We have many members in that area who are understandably worried about the possibility that they may be forced from their farms in order to make way for some unjustifiable missile system. We don't feel the military has any right to come in and tell these people, 'Get off your farm, we need the land.'"

Stencel said that he also was disturbed that public hearings on the proposed missile system have not been scheduled for the area.

drive friendly

Hurry! Hurry!
A must for every desk.
AggieWarHymn
Supply Very Limited.
Musical Transparent Paperweight from Switzerland
Happy Cottage
(Across from Luby's)

ALTERATIONS
IN THE GRAND TRADITION OF OLD TEXAS WHERE MOTHER TAUGHT DAUGHTER THE FINE ART OF SEWING — SO HELEN MARIE TAUGHT EDITH MARIE THE SECRETS OF SEWING AND ALTERATIONS.
"DON'T GIVE UP — WE'LL MAKE IT FIT!"
AT WELCH'S CLEANERS, WE NOT ONLY SERVE AS AN EXCELLENT DRY CLEANERS BUT WE SPECIALIZE IN ALTERING HARD TO FIT EVENING DRESSES, TAPERED, SHIRTS, JEAN HEMS, WATCH POCKETS. ETC.
(WE'RE JUST A FEW BLOCKS NORTH OF FED MART.)
WELCH'S CLEANERS
3819 E. 29th (TOWN & COUNTRY SHOPPING CENTER)

PRE-LAW SOCIETY
First meeting of the fall semester
BIGGER TAMU
Legal Advisor Gaines West
7:30 p.m. - Tues., Sept. 5
NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY
American Cancer Society

HUNTER'S CREEK STABLE
BOARDING HORSES
Teaching English & Western Training near campus.
located hwy 6 E bypass
take hwy 30 exit S on E frontage Rd ½ mile
College Station, Texas
6936482 bus. 8460851 hm.

CLEARANCE SALE!
NOW ONLY $59.88
ANY STYLE OF COWHIDE OR BULLHIDE NOCONA BOOTS!
HOUSE OF BOOTS
112 NAGLE
(IN THE GREYHOUND BUS STATION)
NORTHGATE
WE CARRY NOCONA, CHRIS ROMERO AND AL GUTIERREZ (OUR PERSONAL BRAND) BOOTS
SKINS AVAILABLE
MULE - ELEPHANT - CAMEL - CALF - COW
TURTLE - BULLHIDE - OSTRICH - ELK

MANOR EAST 3 THEATRES
MANOR EAST MALL 823-8300
FOUL PLAY 7:15-9:35
HOOPER 7:25-9:45
CHEECH & CHONGS UP IN SMOKE 7:35-9:50
Skyway Twin 822-3300
WEST
THE CHEAP DETECTIVE
PLUS
CASEY'S SHADOW
EAST
HIGH ANXIETY
PLUS
FIRE SALE
Campus 846-6512 COLLEGE STATION
STAR WARS

Tupinamba
Eddie Dominguez '66
Joe Arciniega '74
For those who demand the Real Thing!
If you want the real thing, not frozen or canned . . . We call it "Mexican Food Supreme."
Dallas location:
3071 Northwest Hwy
352-8570

WE WANT YOU!
The Aggieland '79 needs photographers. You must have at least one 35mm SLR camera and two lenses to qualify. Experience in black and white processing and printing also required.
To apply, come by Room 216, Reed McDonald Bldg., between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

RECORD COLLECTION
33⅓ SALE
All Albums & tapes ⅓ off list price
Sale Runs Through Friday, May 12
RECORD COLLECTION
211 University Drive 846-3901