



# COMMUNITY

Alaska Railroad Corporation  
1st Quarter 2015



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Daily summer passenger service returns mid-May. Check out the railroad web site for trains traveling between Seward, Whittier, Portage, Girdwood, Anchorage, Wasilla, Talkeetna, Denali and Fairbanks.

## RAILROAD RECEIVES PRO PATRIA AWARD

### DoD recognizes employer support of Guard / Reserve employees

On April 1, the Alaska Railroad (ARRC) received a Department of Defense (DoD) award recognizing its support of railroad employees serving in the National Guard and Reserve. The DoD Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) program honored ARRC with the *Pro Patria Award*, which is presented annually by each ESGR State Committee. Craig Campbell, the Alaska Aerospace Corporation President/CEO and Chair for the Alaska State ESGR Committee, presented the award during a regular ARRC Board meeting.



ARRC Chair Linda Leary accepts the *Pro Patria Award* from Craig Campbell.

(photo by Stephenie Wheeler)

*Pro Patria* recipients have demonstrated the greatest support to Guard and Reserve employees through their leadership and practices, including adopting personnel policies that make it easier for employees to participate in the National Guard and Reserves. This is the highest level award that may be bestowed by a state ESGR committee, and is given only to employers who have been previously honored with the *ESGR Above and Beyond Award*, and who have had at least one supervisor or other representative honored with the *ESGR Patriot Award* presented to individuals. ●

## GRAVEL TRAINS FEATURE "CONNABOOSE"

### Safety drives fabrication of conex-caboose hybrid

Those traveling between Anchorage and Palmer this spring and summer may notice a new addition to gravel trains – the *Connaboose*. While the name may sound like a contraption from a Dr. Seuss storybook, the railroad's newest fabricated equipment has a serious role to play in safety.

The term "Connaboose" comes in part from its construction (using an intermodal container) and in part from its function (a caboose). Here's why we built it: About a year ago, the Alaska Railroad had to remove the Palmer loop track from service because it was no longer being used or maintained by the two companies that had

(see "Connaboose" on page 3)

# FAIRBANKS OPEN HOUSE MAY 9, 2015

The Alaska Railroad's 2015 "Railroad Days" community open house is scheduled for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, May 9. *Railroad Days* events provide Alaskans with a unique opportunity to interact with railroaders and to learn about the state's railroad. The open house features popular FREE train rides, and static displays of railroad locomotives, railcars and other equipment that afford an up-close, hands-on experience. The 9th Army Band ensemble will add to the festive atmosphere, playing popular music. Several activities are geared toward children, such as railroad balloons, tattoos, Operation Lifesaver and Alaska Railroad giveaways, all staffed by railroad volunteers.

A local Fairbanks area Scouting troop will be on hand, offering affordable hot dogs, snacks and beverages. The Fairbanks Depot gift shop and rail ticket counter will also be open, and ARRC will be offering Open House specials featuring amazing deals on summer rail travel.

The open house is held in Anchorage in even years; Fairbanks in odd years. ●

# LONGEST-SERVING WOMAN RETIRES

## Real Estate Director Karen Morrissey marks 47.5 years

Real Estate Director Karen Morrissey retired from the Alaska Railroad, effective April 2. Having served 47+ years, she is easily the longest-serving woman in the company's history.

Shortly after Morrissey arrived in Alaska, she joined the railroad October 9, 1967, during a time when railroading was considered a man's career. Her first assignment was as a Steno Clerk-Timekeeper for the all-male Operations Shop. As an organized, determined and innovative employee, Morrissey soon managed key administrative functions before being promoted into the ARRC's executive ranks. As the head of Real Estate since 1996, Morrissey's legacy is a fundamentally sound department.

Railroad employees and several retirees, colleagues from Denali Federal Credit Union (she is on DFCU's Board), and a number of personal friends gathered on April 1 at ARRC Headquarters to pay tribute to

Morrissey's remarkable tenure and service. In turn, she recalled an interesting career and many memorable colleagues.

The April 1 celebration concluded as VP Corporate Planning & Real Estate Jim Kubitz unveiled plans to name the headquarters building clock tower in Morrissey's honor. "This is fitting, given the nearly five decades of time Karen has spent as a railroader," noted Kubitz, "and for almost two decades, when she looked out her office window, the clock tower was a prominent part of the view."

As one of eight siblings growing up in Wisconsin, Morrissey was expected and required to be responsible and work hard. Those ingrained attributes have been highly apparent throughout Morrissey's long career. Dozens of co-workers and friends concur that Morrissey deserves the title "Alaska Railroad's Hardest Worker – ever!" ●



**Karen Morrissey and her husband Laurie Gray are delighted with plans to rename the clock tower in front of the railroad headquarters building.**



**VP Corporate Planning & Real Estate Jim Kubitz unveils plans to name the headquarters building clock tower in Karen Morrissey's honor.**

# INJURIES IN CURRY: RAILROAD TO THE RESCUE!

## Railroad train, track and security employees respond to emergencies

On two different occasions during the first quarter, the Alaska Railroad came to the rescue of residents who were injured while recreating in remote Curry, which is accessible primarily by rail or trail. Railroaders offered essential transportation and coordination.

### Smacked by a Sled:

Residents Lucy and Brian said they thoroughly enjoyed a beautiful day and access to superb sledding after deboarding the special *Nordic Ski Train* that parked near Curry on March 14. They appreciated even more the railroad's response to Brian's mishap during his last sled run of the day; the sled smacked his nose hard enough to break it. "Blood gushed. Railroad employees swooped in," Lucy wrote in a "thank you" letter. A medic offered immediate first aid, while the train crew coordinated with nearby track maintenance (MOW) workers to transport the pair by hi-rail (vehicles equipped with steel wheels for travel on the rail). Unfortunately, when the MOW driver delivered Lucy and Brian to Talkeetna, a bigger

emergency was in play and local medical staff were unavailable to attend Brian's nose. The hi-rail delivered Lucy and Brian to the Talkeetna Depot, where the train stopped to pick the duo up for a ride back to Anchorage.

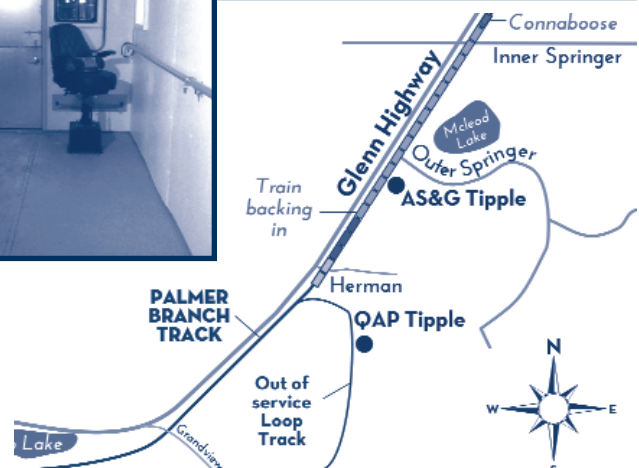
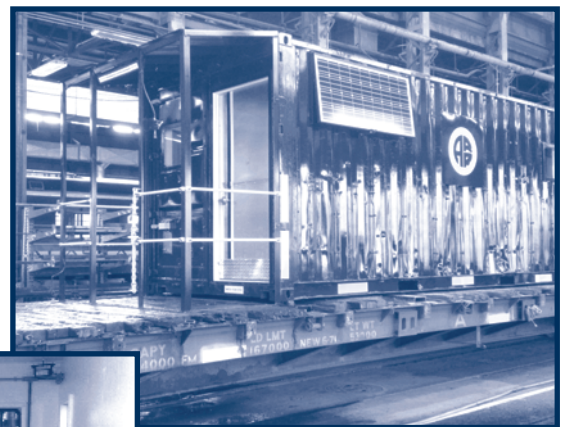
### Suffering Scout:

Another medical assist occurred April 4, when the wife of a Boy Scout Troop leader called the railroad to convey an emergency at Curry, where about 20 people associated with a local Scouting Troop were permitted to camp overnight. The troop leader had contacted his wife by satellite phone to report that a 13-year-old scout had broken his leg while hiking, and they were hoping to catch a train that could transport the boy to a medical facility. With no southbound trains scheduled to move through the area that day, a nearby MOW hi-rail was again tapped for transport. Within a half-hour the hi-rail was on-site and soon carried the boy and the troop leader to Talkeetna, where the boy's parents were waiting to take their son to the hospital. ●

## CONNABOOSE ... (continued from page 1)

jointly built it for looping and loading their aggregate trains. The Alaska Railroad had also used it to loop the Anchorage Sand & Gravel (AS&G) 86-hopper gravel trains that load at the AS&G gravel facility along the Palmer Branch line.

Without the loop track, ARRC gravel trains must now back up along the Palmer Branch with the end of the train in the lead. This requires a trainman to keep an eye out, while hanging from the side of a hopper car at the rear of the train and communicating on a portable radio. To address safety concerns, the railroad considered several options, including purchasing a caboose. Instead, a more cost-effective solution was the in-house design of a mobile platform (a flatcar) equipped with a shelter made from an intermodal conex-style container. Railroad mechanics executed the plan, outfitting the shelter with LED solar-powered back up lights, seats, hand holds, emergency air valves on each end with hand holds and sill steps to make getting on and off much safer. ●





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| <input type="checkbox"/> Receiving more than one copy | <input type="checkbox"/> Email Address wrong |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contact person changed       | <input type="checkbox"/> Name Misspelled     |

# RAILROAD HIRES NEW CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

## Technology veteran Jim Ratchford joins railroad as CIO in early 2015

The railroad recently hired technology and military veteran James Ratchford to head the railroad's Technology Department. As Chief Information Officer (CIO) he oversees ARRC information technology applications and systems, including data center, network, telecommunications and radio. Before joining ARRC, Ratchford held executive technology posts at Walt Disney; Seattle Public Schools; and Boeing Employees Credit Union.



*Jim Ratchford shares his experience during a railroad safety summit.*

as an advisory board member for the University of Washington (UW) SIM / Informatics Program.

His own education includes earning a master's degree in Management Information Systems, and becoming certified as an information systems analyst, both from Bowie State University, in Bowie, Maryland. He earned a bachelor's degree in business management from the University of Maryland in College Park.

While in Seattle (2002 - 2014), Ratchford also contributed many volunteer hours to develop the local technology trade as president and board trustee for the Society for Information Management (SIM), Seattle Chapter – an association of CIOs, senior IT executives and other IT leaders. In addition, he served five years

As a world traveler Ratchford admits a penchant for adventure and good food. He was drawn to the railroad in part for location. "Alaska has such diversity and culture, and the people here are some of the most welcoming I've come across," he said. "I look forward to exploring with my family." Ratchford resides in Anchorage with his wife Birgitt and son Erik. ●