

CAPITOL TO CAPITOL

The "Stripper" Pole

By: Robert "R.B." Frank— Legislative Rep Div. 839

One cultural trait all of our world's people have in common is the giving of nicknames to things liked or disliked. Safety alert and culturally alert North American R.R. people have given the nickname "stripper" pole to the user unfriendly grab poles found at the ends of tank cars. This particular nickname is as logical and humorous, as its hardware is dangerous, as trainmen uncontrollably "twirl" during moments of slack action. As with any well founded nickname, this one will forever stick until our R.R. community abolishes "stripper" poles like some communities have abolished stripper bars.

To mitigate tank car "twirl", some of our Carriers have imposed new three-point contact riding rules, which are isometrically awkward and dangerously fatiguing, especially for Belt-Pack operators. As one switchman said, "I feel as if I'm riding half upside down when I follow the new riding rule". Another said, "To comply with the new riding rule, you need to be "Spider Man". (This last quote sounds like yet another nickname for the riding rule itself — the "Spider Man" Rule.)

To further mitigate tank car "twirl", some trainmen have empowered themselves to not ride tank cars at all. Instead, these safety minded professionals walk their multi-million dollar car cuts in and out of tracks and leads, thereby increasing their bodily exposure to the most injury causing R.R. activity of all — walking! In turn, to mitigate the extra walking, some trainmen use self-empowerment to call and wait for Milepost or Rezenberger taxis to help with the longer shoves and pulls of tank or intermodel cars.

As you can see, as dwell time for railcars go up, velocity for railcars go down. At a time when our R.R. industry is struggling with capacity and velocity, a very easy economic argument can be made for user friendly railcars of all types. When totaled, the expense of taxi fares, walking related injuries, 2 M.P.H. walking vs. 10 M.P.H. riding, overtime, railcar per diem, customer delay, lost customers, lost rail yard capacity and most ironic of all, the cost of building new yard capacity to compensate for wasteful yard practices, results in a total financial waste where future savings will be measured as a rate of return against that waste. As you can see, user friendly railcars are absolutely key to these future savings.

In conclusion and going forward, improvements in safety will absolutely need to go hand in hand with improvements in velocity. Indeed, for too many years, improvements in safety have been at the expense of velocity. Long term, if our R.R. industry is to remain competitive, we will need to prevent ourselves from sinking further and further into safety "quick sand". Interestingly, all of the so-called eight high-tech growth industries are able to grow velocity, while at the same time grow capacity. In our own

growth case, user friendly railcars, of all types, will help us do the same. In the next issue of Capitol to Capitol, we will introduce user friendly railcar hardware so stupid-simple, you might laugh at how inobvious the obvious can be. The article's title will be: "For Less Than \$99 Per Cat". Until then, thanks again.