Road Runner

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In the last three months, I have had an opportunity to travel the province. My trips have taken me to the Northwest Region to see, first-hand, the ravages of Mother Nature in her assault on major highways in that area; to the Central Northeast, Kootenay and Thompson/Okanagan Regions to explain the process in developing the Transportation Plan; to the South Coast Region to open the Pacific International Auto Show and to meet Regional managers; to the Vancouver Island Region for the WESTAC Annual Conference and the recent meeting of the Association of Vancouver Island Municipalities.

In all areas, input from Ministry employees has been tremendously positive. I appreciate your assistance and wholehearted support. Thank you.

The Honourable Neil Vant
Minister
Transportation and Highways

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On the Cover
Wayne Gasser, Traffic Supervisor in the Lillooet Branch in Columbia Shuswap illustrates how interaction works.

FROM THE DEPUTY MINISTER

The last three months were extremely busy for Ministry staff. This past winter has been a good reminder of what winter is all about - heavy snowfalls, fluctuations in temperature, abnormal weather conditions. With Spring just around the corner, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for a job well done under stressful circumstances.

In bringing you up-to-date on the status of the Ministry reorganization, I am pleased to report that over 100 jobs have been posted since the beginning of the year. Almost forty of these are a direct result of the reorganization. I expect a great percentage of management level positions will be filled within the next few months as new postings are being advertised each week.

The process is lengthy and I appreciate your patience during the last six months.

Vince Collins,
Deputy Minister
Transportation and Highways
FROM THE EDITOR

This is our second edition of the newly designed Road Runner. I hope that you find the contents both interesting and informative. As we have observed before, our Ministry is undergoing many profound long-term changes, so there is always news these days about new initiatives and plans, along with ongoing programs, to pass along to you.

I have appreciated your comments and suggestions for the Road Runner, and would like to encourage you to send more. Please let us know about any special events coming up in your region, or tip us off about employees with interesting talents, jobs or hobbies that we can interview and profile. Anything at all that you think will be of interest, we would like to hear about. If you have questions about the Ministry — policies, plans, procedures, etc. — don't hesitate to ask us for the facts. We will endeavour to publish answers for you in future issues.

In this issue, we have included stories about some very interesting people doing important work throughout the province, as well as some detailed information about major programs presently underway and upcoming.

Thank-you for reading! Please be in touch.

Betty Nicholson

REGIONAL SECRETARIES MEET

For the first time in the history of the Ministry, Regional secretaries gathered together this month for a day at Headquarters. Their major goal was to discuss concerns relating to their roles in the new organization and to identify procedures that could be streamlined or standardized in order to increase efficiency. By the end of the day, each secretary felt the whole process had been extremely worthwhile and informative.

Bruce McKeown Discusses Planning and Major Projects

Over the last several months, the Ministry has increased the emphasis on transportation planning and strengthened our planning capability, both in the regional offices and at Headquarters.

The Headquarters Planning Division is under the direction of Bruce McKeown, Assistant Deputy Minister Planning and Major Projects. This division is responsible for developing and refining transportation strategies, policies, programs and priorities, and provides a consistent framework for transportation planning being conducted in each Region. The Division is composed of two Branches, Highway Planning and Planning Services.

In addition, Mr. McKeown is responsible for the management of major highway projects and the development of project management techniques and systems in use both at Headquarters and Regions.

"There have always been forms of project management in the Ministry", he says, "but they were not well developed. Lines of responsibility were not clear and there was inadequate control of budgets and scope changes over the multi-year life of major projects. Another major problem was the compartmentalization of functions: planning, design, land acquisition, and construction. A key principle now is to place the responsibility for all facets of the project with one person who is accountable for the overall program."

Major Projects

"A number of major projects will be managed out of Victoria, each one in excess of $50 million, with planning, design and construction spanning multiple years, and other complexities."

The first of these projects - and one which will serve as a proto-
Vancouver Island Highway
This very large package (with a $600 million-plus budget) of Vancouver Island Highway improvements was announced last November. The work will include upgrading the Pat Bay Highway (between Swartz Bay and Victoria), and a portion of the Trans-Canada Highway (just north of the Capital city) to freeway standards. The balance of the Trans-Canada Highway to Nanaimo will be upgraded to expressway standard. Around Nanaimo and North to Campbell River, a new inland highway will be built to freeway standards. The scope of the various components is currently under evaluation. Preliminary design and schedules are being confirmed, Bill Weir has been retained as Project Director with Project Manager Richard James from the Ministry. The program is targeted to complete in 1996.

Cassiar Connector
This $85 million project in East Vancouver will upgrade 2.3 km of the Trans-Canada Highway between the Second Narrows Bridge to the freeway in Burnaby to full freeway standard. Two major interchanges will be constructed as well as a 730 m tunnel for a portion of the freeway to minimize impacts on the adjacent community. The consulting firm of Fenco-Lavalin is responsible for the project management. Project completion is scheduled for late 1991.

Sea-to-Sky
Highway 99 - Horseshoe Bay to Squamish. This project is in the early stage now, with staff looking at the most advantageous strategy to improve the highway corridor. Design and construction to follow. Ross Coates is the Project Director.

Burnaby Freeway
Gregg Singer is also responsible for developing a strategy to maximize the Transportation capacity of the Burnaby Freeway between the Cassiar Connector and the Port Mann Bridge area of the Trans-Canada Highway.

Planning
“Planning has previously been primarily a headquarters function in the Ministry”, McKeown comments, “but we are shifting the emphasis. There will now be a planning function built into the structure of each region, to be more responsive to local considerations. Each region will have a Manager of Planning.

“The planning in Victoria will re-focus its scope with emphasis on establishing a framework for planning at the regions, program development, policy, and project planning in support of major projects. This work will be the responsibility of Glen McDonald, who has recently been appointed to the position of Executive Director of Transportation Planning.”

McDonald has two branches under his direction - Highway Planning and Planning Services - as well as four senior policy advisors and a legislative officer.

These transport advisors (Marine, Air, Rail/Pipeline and Highway), are each responsible for developing policies for these modes. Their staff will carry out research, provide advice and monitor trends in their particular mode. A branch legislative officer will provide material relating to legislation.

The Highway Planning Branch has four working areas:

Program Planning - with over-

THE PROCESS OF BUILDING A NEW HIGHWAY

Building a highway is not as simple as some would like to think. Listed here are the various steps leading to the completion of a new highway system:

1. Request for Capital Project
2. Determine design standards
3. Preliminary design
   A. Aerial photography of proposed new section
   B. Develop construction alternatives and variations on routing
   C. Estimate costs
   D. Collect wide range of related data
   E. Conduct environmental and social impact studies
   F. Evaluate alternatives and choose optimum
4. Soil Studies
5. Engineering survey
6. Detailed design
7. Property acquisition
8. Utility relocation
9. Schedule construction
10. Obtain funding approval
11. Tender
12. Construction Phase
   A. Clear and grub land
   B. Blasting (if required)
   C. Build roadbed, curbs and gutters or pullouts, etc.
   D. Construct bridges, culverts, retaining walls
   E. Pave
   F. Manage traffic during construction with detours, etc.
13. Fence, sign, landscape, etc.
14. Open and schedule maintenance standards
FAST AND FAIR
Dear Mr. Vant:
Recently I sold my house and to close the sale I subdivided the property into two parcels.

Before starting this venture, I had heard all sorts of comments about how slow and uncooperative the employees of the City of Victoria Planning Department have been. However, I can attest to the contrary. Mr. and Mrs. Vant, I have found the City to be most responsive; the concerns genuine. The procedures fair and equitable; to short this has been most interesting and reassuring.

I would like to recognize these two employees:
Mr. R.G. deGraff
District Planning Technician

Mr. Harold Hunter
Regional Approving Officer

I would also like to congratulate both of you for being recognized.

Yours truly,
Wayne Nesbitt
Coquihalla Toll Booth

LONG SERVICE EMPLOYEES RECOGNIZED
On November 24, 56 long service employees were treated to a 'social hour' in Victoria by the Ministry of Transportation and Highways. The staff were treated to drinks and hors d'oeuvres before heading to the dinner at Government House. Transportation and Highways Minister Neil Vant welcomed everyone and congratulated all the employees on their dedication to government.

Elaine Minnis, Brenda Tresidder and Shirley Duncan of Personnel, Headquarters presented each guest with a red carnation corsage or boutonniere.

Double decker buses transferred the honoured guests to Government House and returned them to the Chateau Victoria after the dinner.

The following employees have reached the quarter-century or 35 year level with government:


MESSAGE FROM A TRAVELLER
This little poem was written by one of the truck drivers who use our facilities on a regular basis.

There you are in your glass enclosure
Protected from nature and certain exposure.
You are what we call a Toll Booth Troll,
Your job is to collect a highway toll.
Through cold winter nights and hot summer days
You are there to make certain that everyone pays.
To a weary driver you're a welcome sight,
With a nice warm smile on a cold winters night.
The job you're doing, you probably hate
But to all of us drivers, we think you're great.

Yours truly,
Chris
Coquihalla Toll Booth

LETTERS

STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT TRAFFIC SIGNALS
On January 31st, Wayne Keiser and Tony Hryko brought the traffic signal light system to my school for grade sevens to observe.

The two men were very efficient in setting up the apparatus (with no disruption to the school). Wayne's commentary to the students was very good. He was cautious in language they would understand.

Wayne and I had agreed to try this "primary display" on grade sevens as they had just completed a basic unit in electricity. The idea was worthwhile as the students were interested but electronically, their knowledge is limited. As a result, we would not attempt the demonstration with older elementary students again. For primary students, it is excellent.

I appreciate Wayne's flexibility in attempting to try out the apparatus on older students. Wayne should be commended for visiting our school a week early in order to assess the facilities needed for his demonstration.

Tony's efforts in creating the model lamps and in assisting were much appreciated.

I enjoyed meeting Tony and Wayne. Thank you for allowing them to make a presentation at our school. Their visit was definitely worthwhile.

Yours sincerely,
David Oppenheimer
Science Teacher
Elementary School

Editors Note: Please see article on page 11 to learn more about Electrical Branch's informative program.

LETTERS
The privatization of road and bridge maintenance is now virtually complete. In this issue, we present comments from former employees and contractors we contacted around the province recently to get some sense of how they now see the move into privatization.

These opinions obviously do not represent any comprehensive or final say on the matter—merely some feedback at this early stage of the game.

Dave Senechal - Equipment Manager, Mainroad Contracting, New Westminster.

Mainroad - previously the New Westminster District - is an employee-owned group of 140 or so partners who went into business as a company on November 1. Equipment Manager Dave Senechal had previously held the position of Mechanical Foreman for Delta and Cloverdale.

"It's been going well", he says. "It was a shock to start with. We thought we were all being fired! Then we decided that we might as well make our own jobs."

"It took a year or so to complete the process — a stressful year, to put it mildly. After we got rolling, three or four months after privatization, things started to turn around. People began making suggestions about how we could save money, courses we needed and licenses that had to be renewed."

"Morale and motivation are excellent now. Most of us are very happy with the way things have gone. We have bid on a couple of jobs, and found that we can compete successfully against other companies. We've been able to say, "Hey! Our workmanship is better!"

Mainroad's three-year contract with the Ministry includes bridge, road and sign maintenance in the old New Westminster District, a very big area, with the largest and busiest traffic flow in the province.

"We have a lot of special problems", Senechal says. "There is too much traffic for day work, so we do a lot of it at night. Also, we have five swing bridges, which no one else has to deal with, and a huge number of signs in several municipalities. We have the largest bridge crew in the province. We have to use our ingenuity; our service program has to be good; we do a lot of careful planning and looking ahead.

"We're working well with the contract managers. It's no longer a family, it's now a business, but we still have a good working relationship with them."

According to Senechal, operations meetings are held once a month with foremen, contract managers, the district highways manager and the company's executive group, to discuss "the general situation, problems and solutions". Occasional shareholder meetings are held as well - like the one late in February - "to let everybody know how it's going.

"Many of us have long experience with government", Senechal says, "and this has been a whole new ballgame. But we're over the hump now, and nobody's looking back.

"We have more control over our own destiny. Local control is wonderful; we can get answers and design solutions faster than ever before. We inherited a lot that is valuable from government. For instance, we feel we have one of the best preventive maintenance programs in Canada; we'll keep it up. We have some of the best sanding equipment anywhere, and we'll stay with it.

"It's exciting and interesting to be able to go out and compete. It's a great way to keep our people motivated; they feel more appreciated; they can see their own progress. Some of them are finding customers for us on their own; we haven't had to advertise. Some customers who are familiar with our work know that we know what we're doing. We take pride in our work, we always have. Government gave me and others excellent training, and we aren't happy about losing that."
“Overall, however, we’re really enthusiastic about privatization. We’ll be in business for years.”

Ken Smith - Road Foreman, Trendline Industries, Cranbrook

Trendline is responsible for bridge and road maintenance in the Cranbrook, Invermere and Fernie area. They went into business on October 20, with about 100 people on the payroll.

“Lately, it’s been excellent”, says Road Foreman Ken Smith, who held the same position previously with the Ministry. “It was very stressful at the beginning, not knowing where we were going. It was hard on everybody. Since October 20th, a great weight has been lifted off all our shoulders. Enthusiasm is up; we’re in charge of our own destinies, and that’s proved to be a powerful motivation.”

Trendline is owned by the Noelis Corporation of Sparwood, a construction company, with the standard three-year Ministry contract.

Some other work has begun to come our way”, Smith says, “and we can anticipate a lot more in the future. But these days, we’re intent on doing a good job for the government, and haven’t really much time for anything else. Generally, we’re very happy about the way it’s going.”

Gordon Shannon - Vice-President Operations, Bel Maintenance Inc. (Nelson)

Bel Maintenance is a privately-owned company that assumed the road and bridge maintenance contract for the Kootenay Boundary, Selkirk and Central Kootenay districts in October. With approximately 450 hourly and management staff, they are the largest maintenance group in the province in terms of manpower and equipment.

We spoke with Gordon Shannon, Vice-President Operations, in mid February. Shannon had previously been with Bel Construction, a private company. “How’s it going?” he responded to our first question. “Really well — if it would stop snowing.” Shannon describes the period prior to privatization as “confusing and difficult.”

“The Ministry employees had some heavy decisions to make prior to privatization”, he says, “and a lot of people were feeling pretty insecure. Once they got past the initial transition period, things settled down nicely. Now we’re getting good public feedback, and concentrating exclusively on our Highways contract. We haven’t got the time or the inclination to look for other work right now.

“Morale is better than it ever was. Company relationships are a lot more personal; the elimination of red tape and the establishment of local control over day-to-day operations has been great.”

Mike Zylicz - General Manager, North Coast Road Maintenance Ltd., Terrace

North Coast has responsibility for road and bridge maintenance in the Skeena Highways District.

“We’ve had some weird episodes to deal with this winter. At one point, we would get 20 cm of snow in the morning, then rain, then freezing, creating tremendously severe maintenance problems.

“But as I say, crew morale is high. Less red tape, higher pay, local control, opportunities for overtime — all this has helped. Getting out of the bureaucracy has been very good for us. ‘Sure, it was hard initially. We took over on December 1, and I lost a lot of sleep that week. So did a lot of our other people.’

“Our relationship with the area managers is excellent. Of course, they are friends and colleagues from times past, We haven’t taken on any other work yet because we don’t want to compromise our Highways contract. Right now, the future looks bright, and we want to keep it that way.”

Don Neilson - Vice-President Capilano Highways Services Co.

Capilano’s contract maintenance area is the old North Van/West Van - Squamish Whistler Pemberton area, now called the Howe Sound Highways District. (The private company has just been awarded a three year contract for the Sunshine Coast District effective, March 1, 1989).

Capilano was a construction company before taking over the road and bridge maintenance contracts on November 15. According to Vice-President Don Neilson (who was not a Ministry employee before privatization) the company hired about 75 percent of our former employees in the Howe Sound area, bringing that total staff complement to 80.

“We survived the winter” Neilson says, “and we’ve taken on some other work, beside the contract with Highways - some vehicle and road maintenance, as well as outside snowploughing and we’ll be bidding on smaller jobs for the municipalities as they arise. We’re in a stronger position than we’ve ever been before, with the influx of experienced Ministry people. We’re pleased to have a crew like that around.”
On The Front Lines
With Our Avalanche Section

Height of snow on Hwy 37 reached a maximum of 18 metres and averaged 15m.

The Ministry's Snow Avalanche Section has its work cut out for it; maintaining a province-wide avalanche management program. There are 40 different areas in the province with avalanche problems, and about 1000 km of highway in 20 districts directly below avalanche paths.

The objectives of the section sound straightforward enough:

- to maintain public safety on the highways
- to ensure Ministry and contract personnel safety
- to minimize interruptions to traffic

But, of course, there is much more to this important work than first meets the eye. The Avalanche Section was set up in 1974. The staff totals some 30 people in winter, dropping to 24 or 25 in the summer. The Victoria staff of eight provides direction and co-ordination to District Avalanche Technicians and others throughout the province. This group includes Geoff Freer, Head of the Section, Senior Technical Officer Janice Johnson, Snow Avalanche Technician Randy Stevens, Gordon Bonwick, Nic Seaton, Bill Moffat, Martin Madelung, Carol Magee, Alicia Gentile, Sylvia Preto, and Brenda Madelung.

There are six District Avalanche Technicians at work in the province, with from one to four areas to look after in their district. Four Snow Avalanche Technicians each look after a number of smaller areas in several districts. The jobs of the District Avalanche Technicians and their assistants are varied. They include snow stability analysis and avalanche hazard forecasting, which involves monitoring weather forecasts, taking weather observations regarding avalanche occurrences and going up into the higher elevations to do snow profiles (looking at the layers in the snow pack). Two people, both with their industrial first-aid tickets, travel together to carry out these tasks. They come up with a snow stability analysis and determine if there is a hazard to the highway. It's these people on the front line who recommend preventive closures to their District Highways Managers.

There are important steps that help to minimize avalanche hazards and meet safety objectives:

**Long Term**
- Location of a planned highway - Is it in an avalanche area? Can it be moved?
- Building avalanche defense structures - Mounds, stopping dams, diversion dams or snow sheds (which are by far the most expensive)

**Day to Day**
- Preventive closures - The most frequently used method in B.C., occurring when the avalanche hazard forecast is high. Roads are re-opened only when the hazard has decreased.

Technicians in several areas also carry out avalanche control through the use of explosives, and, when necessary, conduct search and rescue operations. Various methods of control with explosives may be utilized, depending upon location, snow pack, instability, etc. These methods include:

- The "Avalauncher" - a device which fires nitrogen-propelled two kilo charges of PETN (a type of explosive), with a maximum range of about 1000 metres. Used in the Kootenay Pass, Bear Pass, and the Revelstoke area, but has problems in strong winds.
- 105 mm recoiless rifles - the most common method.
- Avalanche control ropeways (at two locations only in the province) which are similar to chairlifts. They carry a radio and a little computer, and are sent up the hill to pre-set locations. They then lower and ignite the explosives. These are the first such devices to be employed in North America, although they are common in Europe.
- Helicopter bombing - explosives dropped directly into the
avalanche path; can only be done when the weather allows the helicopter to fly.

- Case charging - bags of explosives are placed at the foot of short slopes and detonated. Shock waves move up the slope and dislodge the snow.

Snow and District Avalanche Technicians are also heavily involved in training staff and contract maintenance personnel in avalanche awareness, safety measures, search and rescue procedures, and weather observation.

Janice Johnson, Senior Technical Officer in Victoria, conducts a "storm watch" around the province. The office acts as a communications co-ordination centre for snow avalanche technicians in the field.

"The winter of 88-89 was heavy until the Arctic front moved down", she says. "More like the "normal" winters of 12 or 15 years ago. Our people were really on the go this season, with several big storm cycles coming through. We have had a break lately, but the avalanche season will not be over until late April or May, so we will be staying with it."

Phil Best, Art Barry, Greg Valks and Lorne Borderoff of Traffic and Design Branch, Kootenays Region, created a scale model of what the Cape Horn Bluffs will look like after the Ministry finishes its proposed improvements. The model was built with a removable section showing a "before and after" scheme and was part of a presentation in New Denver with the Honourable Neil Vant in mid-December.

The Bluffs are located between Sicam and Silverton on Highway 6. The present road is built on the edge of a cliff 185 metres above Sicam Lake. It narrows to one lane for 1 km at the bluffs which rise 220 m overhead. Plans for the roadway involve widening the 1 km section to two lanes and rehabilitating a further 5 km portion. Improvements will include a continuous roadside barrier on outside shoulder, a 3.6 meter wide ditch to catch falling rock and snow, and 197 metres of concrete retaining wall.

(Thanks to Jennifer Bruce, Geotechnical Clerk at Nelson, for the information and photo.)
Radio Room Operators

For highways crews, they are the reassuring voice in the regional office.

In our last issue, we briefly outlined the operations of the Ministry’s communications centre at the Burnaby Region office. These include such things as functioning as the central dispatch office, collecting weather data and providing road reports for the public and the media.

This information is relayed across Canada to two companies in Montreal and Halifax, and broadcast throughout the day on the national cable network Channel 23. In addition, BCAA receives the same information, which they pass on to their members. Many radio stations can access the centre by computer and receive road and weather reports via e-mail.

The communication centre handles all these chores and more, and takes over radio room responsibility after hours (from approximately 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.) in the Central Northeast and Vancouver Island region. Northwest, Thompson/Okanagan and Kootenay regions however, operate a full service 24 hours a day, performing similar functions for their regions as the communication centre does for the lower mainland.

Radio Room Operators - Key people in Regional Communications

We interviewed several radio room operators around the province for this issue of the Road Runner, and discovered that they are a dedicated group of individuals upon whom maintenance crews - sometimes located hundreds of km away in isolated locations - depend for information, guidance and support.

Annie Collins, radio operator at Kamloops for Region 2, says, "We do a lot of what they do at Burnaby for our Region. We gather weather observations and road reports from foremen which are sent to other regions, answer all calls from the public and assist the RCMP."

Annie is very enthusiastic about her job, which she has been doing for 15 years. Region 2 covers the area from 100 Mile House in the north of Princeton and Penticton in the south, west to Lytton and east to Sicamous. There are five regular operators in the Kamloops radio room, and one relief.

“I love it”, Annie says, “There are routine aspects to the job, but no two days are the same. All the guys out on the highway are like a second family to me. When it’s 2:00 a.m. out on the Coquihalla and a crewman is alone and lonely, it’s important that they have someone friendly and familiar they can rely on.”

Emergency calls frequently come in to the radio rooms, concerning highway and other types of accidents.

“It can be heartbreaking at times”, Annie comments. “We talk to some very upset people, and have to get right on to the police and ambulance. We contact the hospital so they know what to expect.

Some hilarious questions are phoned in, from all over the province, and as far away as Alaska and California. They want to know what the road to Vancouver will be like in two weeks, or the weather. I’ve even been asked how much a marriage license costs. But we direct people as best we can, that’s what we’re here for.

“I’m lucky; I enjoy communications so much. It’s a job that gives you a feeling of self-worth. I like being a public servant.”

Doreen Zambano is the radio operator (with one relief) for Region 4 at Prince George. The Central Northeast region is the largest in the province, stretching north to Fort St. John, south to Williams Lake, east to the Alberta border and west to Fraser Lake. She works from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., after which time Burnaby takes over.

Doreen has been on the job for 10 years. “I like it”, she says. “There is a whole family of folks out there whose voices are familiar to me, but whose faces I don’t know. I’m their regular link to headquarters. I know what’s going on right through the region."

“The work gets heavy when the weather is dicey. Avalanches can be a problem in the Pine Pass and along the Alberta border, from Red Pass near Mount Robson to Jasper. There is a steady flow of inquiries and we put out regular updates for radio stations and the RCMP.

“Fate calls come in once in a while, with complaints about ice or snow. Sometimes, people just need someone to talk to. It’s almost like being a crisis line counsellor in the winter.”

Pat Pickering is the senior operator in the communications centre in Nelson, Region 3. Scattered throughout the Region are 29 repeater sites and 1000 mobile radios in vehicles, offices, shops, helicopters and aboard ferries. This Region covers the area from Osoyoos to the Alberta border east-west, and from the U.S. border to mile 194 at the Milaca access north-south.

There are several high passes here, including the Rogers Pass and Salmo-Creston, both over 1800 metres. Winter closures for avalanches are frequent. “When
that happens, it gets crazy here", says Pat, who, with the centre's other operators, are busy around the clock. In the summer, only one radio operator is needed until 3:00 p.m. when Burnaby takes over.

After 15 years on the job, Pat still finds it "enjoyable and interesting." "There is always something different going on", she says. "It's rough when there are bad accidents, like in 1976 when three cars were lost in an avalanche. And not long ago, a man in Trout Lake cut his arm off with a saw and actually managed to call me. We work closely with the police, ambulances and media. Sometimes there are dangerous cargo spills, and traffic has to be re-routed.

"Crew members in remote areas call in as the mountain of the night. It's a pretty big world when you're out there alone. I know everyone by number; I don't know all their names. When I meet them at a social, I say 'oh you must be R307'!"

The Nelson communications centre also programs electronic overhead signs at Golden and Revelstoke for the Rogers Pass, and others at Salmo and Creston. Weather information is picked up from 45 stations, relayed to the Department of Environment in Vancouver, as well as American and Alberta automobile associations.

"It's a heavy job at times", Pat says. "But it's really great, very satisfying."

Gordon Russell is a radio room operator in Terrace, Region 5. He has held similar positions in Nelson and Kamloops, moving to Terrace in 1981. The Region runs from the Yukon border to Kitimat, and from the Queen Charlotte Islands to Burns Lake.

"It's been a busy winter", Gordon says. "Three highways - 16, 37, and 37A - were closed in January with avalanches, but were opened soon afterwards."

"I enjoy the job. I like talking to different people, and answering calls from as far away as Los Angeles, with people wanting to know about whether they can bring the motor homes, and how the road will be in a few weeks. You have to keep your sense of humour and be diplomatic when you're talking to the public. It does get intense at times, especially when there are avalanches down. Then the news media, local people and travelers are clamoring to know what's going on."

Alma Demmit also works in the Terrace radio room, the graveyard shift (12:00 midnight to 8:00 a.m.).

"This winter was a little more exciting than last year", she says. "With more snow and a fair number of avalanches."

Highways crews start calling in weather observations to Alma early in the morning, with the first one coming in about 4:00 a.m. from Port Clements. Calls from 15 other stations continue over the next couple of hours.

Like all radio room operators, Alma has her share of emergencies to deal with. In late February, for example, there was a large fuel truck spill on the highway just out of Terrace. She called the Provincial Highways Emergency Program and the RCMP, and helped to co-ordinate for highways crews dealing with the cleanup.

"The graveyard shift is relatively quiet", she says. "Someone has to be there for the plow and sanding crews - a reassuring person who can contact emergency people when required, or call out a tow-truck. It's like a security blanket for the guys up north on 37 and 37A, where it's a long way between communities. Sometimes I'm their only contact."

In a novel experiment, our Electrical Branch has been bringing the traffic to the kids. And the results are interesting and encouraging.

Ray Reekie, Regional District Manager at the Electrical Branch, in Coquitlam, told us about the project. Tradesmen in the shop built a four-foot by three-foot working model of a typical urban intersection, complete with matchbox-type toy cars and electrically operated traffic lights. A presentation was arranged at an elementary school in Maple Ridge in mid-January, and repeated twice in late February.

"The object of the exercise is to improve the children's traffic awareness", Reekie says. "The model operates like a real intersection. We run the toy cars across the display board, and that changes the signal. We show them how the push-button system works, and explain why they don't have to panic at the flashing hand. We also explain what the other signals mean. I observed the first session, and the students really enjoyed it."

Shop Supervisor Wayne Keiser actually does the presentation, and will be seen on the video that has been made of one of his recent school sessions.

"I enjoy it too, as much as the kids", Keiser says. "Typical questions concern advance warning amber lights - what does that mean? They also want to know what makes the lights change, what the flashing green arrow means, and what it means when the intersection light is flashing amber and red.

"The primary level children are the best to work with (grades 1-3) because they're still positive, enthusiastic and curious."

In the works for possible future use at other schools is the aforementioned video presentation, and a brochure to give to the children to take home, which summarizes the information.
A New Look
In Signing

The Ministry implements a new program for tourist services, facilities and attractions in B.C.

In a co-operative venture, the Ministry of Transportation and Highways and the Ministry of Tourism and Provincial Secretary have developed a new provincial sign policy for tourist services and attractions. The new blue and white designs provide clear, consistent information to help motorists find these facilities. Signs are directional and are not intended to promote any particular service or attraction business.

The new policy provides for standardized signing in both rural and urban areas. The main emphasis and change is in the rural areas, where new, larger signs will display titles (such as gas, food, lodging, camping, tourist attraction), business name panels and directional markings. In urban areas, new white and blue standard symbols will identify provincially approved services where required.

Signs will be produced, installed and maintained by the Ministry of Transportation and Highways through each contractor with no charge to the business operators.

To be eligible, businesses must meet the standards established by both Ministries and must be open to the public at least six days a week. Permits covering private signs for existing lodging, camping and tourist attractions will be cancelled as new signs are installed. Private signing, under permit, will be maintained for other continuing programs such as community welcome and area promotion, as well as combination service club and church signs. Radio stations signing in each district will also receive a new look.

"The Ministry of Transportation and Highways is one of the key players in British Columbia's growing tourist industry", comments our Minister Neil Van't.

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"Our new signing program represents an excellent step forward in providing clearer, better information on signs that are considerably larger than those previously allowed under permit. In addition, we will effectively clean up rights-of-way across the province by removing unnecessary signs, and enhance their scenic value.

"Pilot signing projects have demonstrated that the new policy lives up to our expectations. The first signs were installed in the Spring of 1988 between Hope and Cache Creek. They successfully met the needs expressed by both the service operators and the public for clean, consistent highway directional signing.

"The second pilot project, which commenced in July 1988, involved the installation of new signs between Victoria and Port Hardy. Again, feedback is positive. As a result, we are proceeding quickly with implementation of the program province-wide.

"The benefits are two-fold: we can better advise the travelling public of the location of facilities and attractions while at the same time strengthening our local and provincial economies."

The Minister of Tourism and Provincial Secretary Bill Reid agrees that the new signing policy "represents an important stage in our ongoing program to enhance and develop British Columbia's tourism industry."

"I want to congratulate the Ministry of Transportation and Highways for taking the responsibility for designing the signs and developing standards and eligibility criteria. They have done a terrific job, and we will soon have one of the best such signing systems in North America in place."

"The system brings a new level of form and order to the scenic landscape, showing that effective signing can complement natural surroundings. On the highway, the new signs have been welcomed by the public, and have al-
The Way We Were - Cache Creek Changes

ready shown that they do, in fact, impact positively on local businesses serving the traveller.

"We decided on the new policy in 1987, after some years of experimenting with other systems, none of which were entirely satisfactory", comments Traffic research Officer Neil Vickers. "We proceeded with the development of the symbols and the blue and white colour scheme, and liberalized the distance limitations especially for more remote facilities such as guest ranches and fishing camps. Various systems were looked at, most particularly those from Quebec and Washington State. The Washington State policy was eventually chosen and adapted to our needs.

"The new policy is designed primarily to look after rural areas. In urban areas, we will provide symbols only for services one wouldn't normally find, such as boat launching, camping, marinas, and sacli-stations. Gas, food, and lodging are easily located in urban areas, so signs aren't really necessary for travellers to find these services.

"We are working toward having all signs of interest to visitors in blue and white, and will be adding a whole range of other attractions such as museums, galleries, hatcheries, ski areas and wineries. The policy recognizes the need for a more extensive, standardized, easily recognizable signing system in rural areas to guide visitors to services and attractions."

The new program has been set out in a brochure entitled "A New Look in Signing", available province-wide at Ministry Regional and District offices. Public meetings are being scheduled throughout the province to outline the overall policy and give business operators a chance to ask questions about how the program affects each of them.

IN THE PAST

The upper photograph, taken 1945, shows Cache Creek at the junction of Cariboo Road 10, with Trans-Canada Highway 1. (The Cariboo Road later was designated as Route 2, and in the 1950's it became Route 97). The buildings amongst the trees are those of the Cache Creek Motel, one of the few business establishments in the area at that time. Construction Project 12, Cariboo Highway, Cache Creek to Maiden Creek, saw this junction move easterly to its present location. The construction of the highway, which was done by General Construction of Vancouver, was completed in 1946 and gave the new highway a paved surface of 24 feet. At the time of reconstruction, there were 10 lots surrounding Cache Creek junction.

The lower photo shows the old junction as it is today. Both roads are now within the Village of Cache Creek. The former Trans-Canada is known as Todd Road, while the old Cariboo Road is referred to as the Trans-Canada. The large dark building in the centre is the post office while those in the foreground are a part of the Cache Creek trailer park.

The third picture, shows the junction of Highways 1 and 97 as it is today with the Trans-Canada Highway shown in the centre of the photo. This stretch of the highway was completed during 1947 as part of Project 650 (Ashcroft Manor to Cache Creek, a 10 km project) The large building in the foreground is the Oasis Hotel.

Thanks to Frank Clapp of Victoria for the photos and details.
IN THE FIELD

CONTINUOUS SERVICE AWARDS RECIPIENTS 1988

Years of Service: 25

Antonius P. Aarts
Port Alberni

Clark R. Abel
Sooke

Maurice L. Bagg
McBride

Peter Barnes
Nelson

Leroy E. Briggeman
Robson

Walter Cheveldeau
Penticton

Thomas Churchill
Falkland

John H. Clark
Kamloops

Charles E. Conseiller
Surrey

David Currie
Duncan

Donald Delaine
Dawson Creek

Dallas J. Doyle
Revelstoke

Brent Draper
Kamloops

Christopher A. Gadsden
Sardis

Harbhajan S. Grewal
Nanaimo

Thomas P. Harkness
Victoria

John B. Hecker
Kamloops

John Holland
Clearwater

Victor Irwin
Golden

Donald Isenor
Langley

David Jacobs
Williams Lake

Leonard Klassen
Clearbrook

Gerald Kristoff
Surrey

Joseph Kubek
North Surrey

William Laluk
North Surrey

James Lines
Revelstoke

Ellie Makeiv
Lyttton

John Marriott
Chemainus

David Martens
Rossland

Kenneth Matthias
Lady Smith

John Mawle
Parksville

John McClean
Richmond

Allan Morgenthaler
Smithers

Edward Morley
Quesnel

Hugh Nelson
Clinton

John O'Brien
Kimberley

John Oakley
Cedar Lake

Gerald Raymond
Langley

Allan Rhodes
Sicamous

Ross Robertson
Dawson Creek

Gordon Rodney
Wynneld

Karen Shephard
Nanaimo

From left: John Marriott, Dan Doyle, Clark Abel and Mary Abel.


Years of Service: 35

Albert Blick
Creston

Kenneth Brookbank
Pouce Coupe

Dennis Chisholm
Kelowna

Douglas Doidge
Victoria

Edwin Gaarden
Bella Coola

Eric Kramer
Vernon

Jack Makeiv
Victoria

John McKay
Lyttton

Raymond Meeks
Chase

William Sainsbury
Oliver

John Sheremeta
Kamloops

Alfred Simpson
Burnaby

Leonard Thony
Prince George

Neil Vickers
Victoria

John Watts
Coquitlam

Dale Webb
Vernon

Glen Westman
Delta

Harold Wilde
Kelowna

James Willis
Salmon Arm

Richard Yamaoka
Kamloops

From left: Tom Aarts, Karen Shephard, Har Grewal.

Frank Spisak
South Hazelton

Lloyd Stellingwerff
Coquitlam

Glen Wiley
Fraser Lake

Ronald Winbow
Surrey
IN THE FIELD

SANTA KEN ENJOYS HIS NEW CAREER

Retired general office mailman Ken Wells has made quite a career for himself as Santa Claus in Victoria. Every Christmas season he dons his red suit and white beard and makes his rounds dispensing candy canes and good cheer.

"I started in 1979", Ken says, "when I bought an inexpensive Santa outfit and 300 candy canes. Soon I was up to 1,000 candy canes and a new Santa suit made for me by my wife Dorothy. I have never accepted offers of remuneration or appeared before December 24 with the exception of 1988 when Christmas Eve fell on a Saturday, and this was done to accommodate a sing-song and gathering at Tillicum Retirement Lodge."

He has called in at City Hall, various senior citizens homes and Canadian Legion pubs. He has been invited home to play Santa for many children, listened to the troubles of people and stopped the show at a local bar when he strolled in to give candy canes to the stripper on stage.

"The highlight of all this", Ken says, "took place at Tillicum Lodge. I went up to an elderly lady, over 80 years old, who was sitting in a chair, head down, staring at the floor, completely unaware of any activity around her. I tapped her on the shoulder, and she looked up and said 'Santa!' I learned later from the nurse that she had not spoken for over a year. This is the greatest kind of reward I could ever expect and makes it all worthwhile. What I keep, I lose; what I give away is mine forever."

IN MEMORY OF

John Joseph Epoch
Mr. Epoch began service with the B.C. Government on October 21, 1975 as a radio and Teletype Operator in Kamloops Region. He was promoted to Clerk Grade 2 in 1961 and moved to Golden District as a Clerk Grade 3 in 1962. He returned to Kamloops in 1970 as Timekeeper and remained there until his retirement on March 31, 1988. John passed away on December 22, 1988.

John Leslie Edgar
Mr. Edgar was with the Ministry for 33 years, starting on February 17, 1955 in an auxiliary position as Labourer and Axeman in Kamloops Region. He was promoted to Clerk Grade 2 in 1961 and moved to Golden District as a Clerk Grade 3 in 1962. He returned to Kamloops in 1970 as Timekeeper and remained there until his retirement on March 31, 1988. John passed away on December 22, 1988.

IN MEMORY OF

November, 1988
Art Sankey, MO7, Saanich
Ralph Towers, MO7, Saanich
Jim McCreight, Lab., New Westminster
Clifford McGillivray, Deckhand, Nelson
Ed Rush, MO1, Penticton

December, 1988
Bill Alexander, Technician 2, Burnaby
Norm McRae, Road Fr. A., Saanich
Ken Daub, TJ Mech., Dawson Creek

January 1989
Pat Dunn, District Highways Manager, Chilliwack
Jim Onions, Rd. Fr. B., New Denver
Ron Winbow, District Highways Manager, North Vancouver
Frank Goring, MO3, Lillooet

February, 1989
Peter Byrne, Surfacing Ops. Supervisor, Paving Branch, Headquarters
Maurice Bagg, Rd. Fr. A., McBride
Homer Good, District Highways Manager, Grand Forks
Morley Hyatt, Rd. Fr. A., Nelson
Sandy Murray, MO4, Smithers
George Ash, Deckhand, New Westminster
Ernie Elliott, MO4, Prince Rupert

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Sharlie Huffman: Chairperson of the Women's Program Committee

"THE PENDULUM SWINGS SLOWLY, BUT IT DOES SWING"

Sharlie Huffman, a bridge design engineer - now seconded to the South Island District as Acting Area Contract Manager for Bridges - has been appointed Chairperson of the Ministry's Women's Program Committee. One of the committee's roles is to help carry out the Ministry's commitment to have more women in senior management positions. "Our goal", Sharlie says, "is to advance toward a more balanced representation."

Her comment is supported by Deputy Minister Vince Collins, who says, "I am most pleased to see the Women's Program taking on greater prominence. We have an enormously talented pool of people within the Ministry, many of whom are women. It is up to us to ensure that equal opportunity is available to all our employees to seek their full potential. At the same time, it is up to all staff, men and women alike, to seize upon the opportunities as they become available."

"The executive committee is equally supportive to this fine program. The Women's Programs Committee is a sub-committee of the Executive group. The Executive representative is Dan Doyle, Assistant Deputy Minister, Highways Operations."

Sharlie observes, "the Ministry has not in the past had a women's program committee. The Executive Committee has appointed one to deal with women's program and to work toward a more balanced representation of women, especially in key decision-making roles."

"There will be several initiatives forthcoming, particularly in management training. We want the climate to be better for women to advance at any level. Ours is a big ministry, with traditional male-female role divisions. But this is changing, like society at large."

Sharlie is also the Ministry of Transportation and Highway's advisor to the Women's Secretariat, which is part of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training. She attends meetings with advisors from other ministries and representatives of the secretariat.

"Our job is to set - and hopefully achieve - goals", she states. "And we share information, so as not to be reinventing the wheel all the time."

Through her working life, Sharlie has displayed the kind of tenacity and talents that have been responsible for her successful career in an area traditionally dominated by men. She was in management with Bell Canada in Ontario before coming to B.C. in 1971. She then attended the University of B.C. where she took her Civil Engineering Degree, and joined Highways in 1981 as bridge design engineer, one of perhaps half a dozen women engineers in the Ministry. Meetings. In addition, she is a member of the Project Management Institute of B.C.

Sharlie is an articulate and outspoken critic of stereotypes on television and in day-to-day life. "It's often said that it's a 'man's game' out there. But as women, we don't have to play it; it's not the only way to go."

"My overall aim", she says, "is to help speed the process of slow change from established and traditional role divisions. I want to see a more equal, more logical order taking place. The pendulum swings slowly, but it does swing."

Last November, Sharlie took on the role of inspecting bridges maintained by the contractor in the South Island District - 140 in all, scattered throughout four road areas.

"The contractor is doing very well so far", she comments. "Of course, we're dealing mostly with the same people who were with Highways before. Privatization has been very successful in our area, and it's been an interesting change for me too."

Sharlie also keeps her hand in with extra curricular activities in her chosen profession as well. She is past chairperson of the Engineering Institute of Canada's Vancouver Island Branch, has served as Secretary-Treasurer for several years, and is an active member of the Professional Development Committee of the Association of Professional Engineers (B.C.). She is frequently the only woman at meetings. In addition, she is a member of the Project Management Institute of B.C.

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