



Veterans' Association
of the
Chicago & North Western Railway



Organized December 9, 1924

Locomotive Engineers 3rd Year Machinery & Air Brake School - Graduating Classes



Chicago Avenue, 1945

This class is believed to be the one just ahead of the April 1945 class shown below. Only one man is identified – **Bob Fisher** from the Wisconsin Division. He is standing, second from the right. There were 9 returning veterans from World War II in this class and all were reimbursed for it under the G.I. Bill. This threw an unexpected monkey wrench into the machinery because the instructor, who was paid \$75.00 by each man, did not report the income and was investigated by the IRS! Our thanks to Illinois Division Conductor **Bob Fisher** for this picture.



Chicago Avenue, April, 1945

Front row, left to right: Clearance Jenks (*Milwaukee - standing*), Adam Muraski (*Chicago*), Paul Frisch (*Milwaukee*), Harry McCallum (*Milwaukee*), Zygmunt Klapczynski (*Milwaukee*), Claude Conn (*Chicago*), August Erdman (*Lake Shore*).

Middle Row, left to right: Harvey Ulsberger (*Milwaukee*), Art Ralph (*Chicago*), Walter Herrli (*Chicago*), Gordon Jacobson (*Milwaukee*), Phillip Marten (*Milwaukee*), Arthur Nielson (*Chicago*), Ed Hagstrom (*Instructor*), Harold Jenks (*Milwaukee - standing*)

Back Row, left to right: Ernest Bahringer (*Milwaukee*), Howard Yarbrough (*Chicago*), (Unidentified - *Chicago Man*), (Unidentified - *Chicago Man*), Horace Adams (*Milwaukee*), (Unidentified - *Chicago Man*), Harold Cardo (*Milwaukee*), (Unidentified - *Lake Shore Man*)



Chicago Avenue, 1949

Thanks to **Jim Yanke** and **Walter Gorlewski**, we have this fine photograph of another Engineer's Class believed to be at Chicago Ave. in 1949. All those identified are 1946 men who later obtained engineers' dates in 1959 or 1960. Here's who we know.

Front row: Third from the left with the black cap – **Walter Gorlewski**; third from the right - **Warren Moss**.

Middle Row: On the left with the fedora – Instructor **Ed Hagstrom**.

Back Row: Tallest man with lots of hair - **Frank Belmont**; 5th from right, head leaning is **Dick Degnan**.

Now, Just What Was an "Engineers Class" All About?

Back in the steam days, every fireman had to pass the "Third Year Mechanical & Air Brake Examination" to qualify for promotion to engineer. This was a tough examination and extensive study was required in order to pass. Ed Hagstrom, one of our engineers, conducted an 8-week class to teach these firemen the fundamentals of machinery and air brakes. While taking the class was not required, without it your chances of passing the examination were not very good. Fail the exam twice and you were out of a job, so almost everyone signed up for the class. There were exceptions. Occasionally, a fireman would be so unnerved that rather than face the exam, he resigned and hired out again as a new man.

The examiners were Road Foremen of Engines and Trainmasters who questioned each man, one-on-one, for about half a day. Much of the examination centered on a thorough knowledge of air brakes and Hagstrom was particularly tough on this subject. Many of his questions during the class began: "If such-and-such brake pipe broke, what would happen and what would you do?" It wasn't too long before Hagstrom got the nickname: "Professor Broken Pipe."

Hagstrom charged \$75.00 for the class and it was strictly cash in advance – no credit and no easy payment plan. One fireman pleaded poverty and asked Hagstrom if he could pay later, to which the answer was "**No.**" "**Do you have a car?**" asked Hagstrom. "**Yes.**" "**Sell it,**" ordered Hagstrom. The fireman did and went on to pass the exam.

The \$75.00 tuition was only part of the problem. The class was taken on your own time. If you could hold a job that worked late afternoons and evenings – great. If not, there was no money coming in for the duration of the class. Men from out of town had hotel expenses as well and those not from the Wisconsin Division had almost no opportunity for work.

Does anyone recognize any of the unidentified men in the pictures? Please let the [webmaster](#) know if you do. Our thanks to **Bob Fisher** for the first 1945 picture, to **Jim Yanke** and **Walter Gorlewski** for the 1949 picture and to **Harold Cardo** for letting us use the 1945 picture and for remembering most of the Milwaukee men; to **Wally Smith** and **Walter Skodowski** for identifying most of the Chicago men; and to **Truman Koehn** for help with the Lake Shore men.
