A what? -- Let me explain. A camel is actually a horse designed by a committee and an elephant is nothing more than a mouse built to government specifications. These things don't happen when you work with the board of directors of the Road Agent Association. They simply figure out what they need and then go out and get it.

Seven road agents, Curt Dunn - from Mason, Dave Wadleigh - from Tilton, Henry Sherburne - from Littleton, Bill Murch - formerly from Epping, Garth Witty - formerly from Mont Vernon, Bob Sullivan - from Canaan, and Wes Beebe - from Londonderry, met two times at the Tilton highway garage and put together the largest equipment and demonstration show ever held in New Hampshire.

How did they do it? Wes told me that they just made a few phone calls, wrote a couple of letters, and received a lot of help and cooperation from the folks in Waterville Estates, Jack Evans, Dave Edwards, Keith Markley, and the road crews. But don't forget the private industries that volunteered people, time, and equipment, and don't forget the 275 people who attended the show. Most of the towns who let their road agents serve on the board of directors should be commended for their contribution to help improve local roads in New Hampshire.

Yes, there will be another mountain of demonstrations in 1990. Would you like to be a part of it? Would you like to demonstrate some equipment or set up a display? Maybe you would just like to learn more about the association. Whatever questions you may have, we can answer them at the Technology Transfer Center. Just call toll free in NH 1-800-423-0060 or call 603-862-4348 from out of state.


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Highway Signing Linked To Highway Fatalities

Something to think about...

If you look closely at this article you may find things pertinent to your own municipality's signing and pavement marking policies... Do you have any?

Researchers at the Center for Transportation of the Council of State Governments have found that the highway fatalities are connected to state policies concerning...
The Easiest Job In Town!

The life of a road agent from the eyes of a road agent

Interesting jobs we have as Road Agents, Directors of Public Works, Superintendents of Streets, or whatever name you want to call it.

We have more bosses than you can shake a stick at. They include (but are not limited to) selectmen, town managers, council members, all taxpayers, and people who are just passing through town. They come in all age groups and both sexes.

What our bosses do or have done for a living has no bearing on their vast knowledge of road repair and maintenance.

What our bosses do or have done for a living has no bearing on their vast knowledge of road repair and maintenance.

A well-dressed banker who has someone mow his lawn knows that a tree on the corner will be dead next year and will fall on a car (one of the three that travel the road each day) in the middle of the night. The tree has been alive for the last 150 years, but next year it will be dead. And “you’ll be responsible when someone gets hurt.” After thinking about it, knowing you will be blamed if someone gets hurt, you agree to cut the tree.

After you cut the tree you remember this was the same guy who told you five years ago when you wanted to widen the road there, that it was his tree and you couldn’t cut it down or you would be liable for replacing it with another 150-year old maple set back ten feet from where this one stood.

But today he wants it down; today it’s the town’s tree and responsibility -- and you take it down.

The last leaf hasn’t hit the ground and Mr. Landowner is right out there watching; lucky for you: you missed his mail box (which your crew hits three times every winter), and the shrubs he planted from seed, you missed it all, and your crew will be quick to clean the tree up and get out of there. The chain saws are buzzing, the chipper is howling, blocks of wood are being thrown into the loader bucket (the crew has already decided how to split the wood amongst themselves), when Mr. Landowner walks over to you and says he wants the wood from his tree dumped by the corner of the garage.

In the winter we always know the weather; that is until we walk into the Town Hall and a secretary says “Is it going to snow tonight?” You say we may get some flurries...that starts it. The next secretary says she heard 9-10 inches on Channel 3; the original questioner says she heard 6-8 inches; the building inspector walks by and says he saw the weather map on TV last night and the storm could turn and we’ll probably get a Nor-Easter. The janitor doesn’t think it will do anything. I walk away asking myself why they don’t all become meteorologists. I wonder why they asked me -- how was I to know we would get a warm rain that night?

On the rare occasion when you need something that is not in your budget, and you can’t get along without it, your best course of action is to build it. You have a crew that is very clever and can make something usable out of the junk around the garage. Everyone knows what we need, but no one knows what the one we’re building will look like. One person starts taking things apart; someone else gets out the torches and is cutting metal; someone else is drilling. Soon the whole crew is busy on this thing. Then the town engineer walks in and asks “What’s up?” You tell him you’re building a thing...he looks the situation over and tells you how some parts won’t work well that way and some things won’t work at all. He goes on to explain how to do it right.” You thank him for his expertise and tell him you’ll be sure to incorporate all his ideas. He leaves.

Next to show up is the cop on duty. He should be giving out tickets, but instead he’s looking for a safe hiding place for an hour or two. We shoot the breeze for a few minutes and then wander back into the shop. He sees all the activity and asks the usual questions. After watching awhile he leaves the shop area and we get a cup of coffee. He mentions modifications that need to be made on this thing or it won’t work at all. I make a mental note of all his suggestions and assure him that they will be incorporated.

The help continues for the rest of the morning—bus drivers, buildings, salesmen, etc., all with necessary changes so this thing will work. All are told the changes are noted and will be made. The work continues to completion of the project at the end...continued on p. 9
McTrans -- A National Microcomputer Technology Resource

Periodically I like to put a plug for the McTrans Center in Road Business. This is the best center for transportation software in the United States -- probably the world.

What's more? Membership in McTrans is free!

In May, 1986 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) established the Center for Microcomputers in Transportation (McTrans) to serve the nation as a resource for distribution and support of microcomputer software in the highway transportation field. Replacing three existing centers and now operating independently of FHWA, McTrans provides expert advice, information exchange and, of course, a wide range of excellent transportation software at very reasonable costs.

Areas represented by the software include construction management; environment; highway design; pavements, bridges, and hydraulic; maintenance; safety; surveying; traffic engineering; and, urban transportation planning. McTrans distributes public domain software developed by FHWA, state DOT's, universities, local transportation agencies, and private individuals. The Center also distributes both transportation and some general purpose "freeware", "shareware", "user-supported" programs and a number of the more popular mainframe programs.

McTrans provides technical support for a wide range of software, and in some cases, even provides the software maintenance, ensuring users of timely updates, user tips, and the highest level of technical support. In short, McTrans is a full service software support center.

McTrans has a professional staff of faculty, programmers, technical support, and administrative personnel to offer users a variety of services, such as:
- Quarterly McTrans newsletter and periodic bulletins.
- Software catalogs and helpful software "finders".
- Hundreds of programs, manuals, and user references.
- McTrans USER electronic bulletin board.
- Technical assistance hotline to help find solutions to your application problems, data errors, or just general microcomputer information.
- Direct software support of several of the most popular problems to minimize the delay in correcting software "bugs" and updated your copy (meanwhile, notifying all users of the problems).
- The Software and Source Book (SSBook) - one of the best resources available for identifying software which meets your needs.

McTrans; registered software services; and, copies of McTrans' mailing list.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of McTrans can call 904-392-0378 to receive a catalog and be added to the mailing list at no charge.

Reprinted from the University of North Carolina, Institute for Transportation Research and Education Newsletter.
THE R.A.A. PHOTO ALBUM

We started by looking at all the displays set up in the parking lot. Around 10:00 AM the busses started up and began to transport people to all of the demonstrations happening on the mountain. If you weren't there you missed the best public works show in New Hampshire. Just Take A Look -- And This Wasn't The All Of It!
Above: At this demo, road agents had a chance to get a good look at plastic vs. steel culvert piping. Two culverts were installed during the day.

Above: Some of the wives and children took advantage of the facilities and enjoyed the sun and water.

Above: Two types of Geotextiles were installed on a gravel road. This photo shows a woven fabric.

Below: Town employees had a chance to see and hear the difference between woven and non-woven fabric. This photo shows a non-woven fabric.

Above: Road Agents watched an asphalt recycling project in action.
Above: Spectators crowd around a shoulder repair demonstration where chips and asphalt were sprayed onto the road shoulder.

Above: A close-up shot of the shoulder repair using sprayed chips.

Above: An extensive chip sealing operation was available for the viewing. One of the sections included a latex additive.

Below: When there are a lot of road agents in one place you can be sure that there will be a lot of food for lunch. The line was long but it moved through quickly.

Above: A rubber tired roller was used to "set" the chips during the chip-seal demo.
Above: Anne Petroski, a top notch welding instructor and CWI (certified welding inspector), demonstrated how to get the most out of a torch and other welding techniques.

Above: The workers got to lunch any old way they could -- even if it meant hopping a ride on a rubber tired roller.

Above: Road agents watch as a new and innovative approach to cleaning up gravel roads is demonstrated.

Below: A closer view of the front mounted "pick-up rake" in action.

Above: We had a lot of help operating equipment at the demo sites. Without these guys nothing could have happened.
Left: One of my favorite grader operators, Walter “Butch” Somero, stands in front of his motor grader with Bill Murch (Top). Walter and Bill came up to Waterville Estates the day before the show. They helped set up the demo sites and kept things running smoothly the following day during the show. Walter spent most of the time in his grader -- including eating his lunch on the go. I think he liked it that way. You'll never see such a smile as the one on Walter's face when that machine starts up and the levers are ready to pull.

Walter Somero, the road agent for Sharon, New Hampshire, helped out at the 1988 Road Agent Association and if we're lucky he'll be there again next year. Would you like to know how to operate a grader, I mean make it sing and dance? Walter is your man.

Thanks for the help Butch!

Right: After everyone left the show a few dedicated workers had to put the roads back together. Not an easy task. But, if you're a New Hampshire road agent or equipment operator its all in a days work.

The many people behind the road agent association's annual mountain of demonstrations, both private industry and municipal employees, deserve a word of appreciation for a job well done.

Thank you!
of the day, without any change from the original plan.

The following day the thing is out on the job doing what it was built to do. The engineer, the cop, the bus driver and just about everyone else in the town drives by and sees this thing working fine. The next day the word is out, but it depends on who you're listening to on what the word is. In the Police Department the word is the cop designed it; in the Town Hall the engineer did it, and so on... everyone is putting themselves on the back. At the Budget Committee meeting they ask why we didn't just buy one -- "It would look a lot better."

Pot holes are always good for a laugh. They swallow cars, trucks, and buses, no matter how big they are. "The pot hole in front of my house is big enough to swallow a bus." When you get there you find the gas company has scraped away the one inch overlay to get to a shut-off valve, and left a six inch cover exposed.

Pot hole seems to be a universal word for almost every road problem. If a culvert leaks, "there's a pot hole clear across the road"; if a plank is missing off a wooden bridge, "there's a pot hole in the middle of that bridge"; if there's a hole in the concrete steps leading to the library, I'll be told "there's a pot hole in the steps by the railing." So when someone says "there's a pot hole," don't fill the truck with cold patch and rush out to fix it.

Hiring people to work for the town can be quite a trip. I had interviewed dozens of people for a mechanic's position. Some were good, some were great, some I'm sure were breathing, but they didn't move fast enough to prove it. The one I hired had a resume that should have put him at the right hand of Jacoess. He knew so much about cars and trucks and had so many tools that I thought I would have to put an addition on the garage just to house them. These weren't just tools, they were Snap-On, MAC, Cornwall, all the best. He had gauges, testers, everything the mind could imagine. This guy was going to be a great mechanic.

The first job I gave him was an air leak on a truck brake system. He gave it the quick once-over, and said "It's this valve." We went for a new valve, no good. "The new valve is defective." Well, they have plenty of good ones there, let's just get another. Oh no, another bad valve from the auto parts store.

That continued for four valves. I told Mr. Mechanic I guessed it's not that valve. We finally found the problem elsewhere.

The next job was changing tires. He told me he'd done that 1,000 times so I left him to his own devices. I returned shortly after and found him struggling with the tire. He said he'd taken all the nuts off, but it wouldn't come off the hub. I looked and was shocked to see he hadn't removed the chucks. Things kept getting worse, and came to an end when he drove a truck into the grease pit.

I then made a very smart move -- I hired a farmer to be a mechanic. I've never seen a tractor on the back of a wrecker and with a little bailing wire, farmers can keep most equipment running for years.

Selectmen are a funny lot to deal with. You can get an answer out of one of them, but don't take it to the bank. The only answer that counts is when all three or five, whatever the case may be, get together, hash it out, kick it around, study it, table it, and in a month or two decide to let you handle it the way you think is best.

This is not to say one selectman can't tell you what needs to be done. Many times you'll find they tend to have more things for your crew to do the day after church, lodge meetings, Chamber of Commerce breakfasts or large house parties. Very seldom do you get a long list of things to do after selectmen's meetings. These times are spent on important stuff, such as deciding what color next year's dump sticker will be, or if the new tags the town clerk sells will be shaped like a bone, clover or a dog house. They will not discuss whether you should hire an additional employee or try to find a contractor to plow the new subdivision. That's the type of stuff that gets tabled even if it's December 1st.

They will decide that if the snow and not the plow hits a mail box and knocks it down it's because the post is rotten and it's the responsibility of the landowner to provide a proper supporting structure for the mail box. There are a few exceptions to this rule, such as the selectman's mailbox or any relative, friend, lodge brother, elderly person, secretary, new person who just moved into town, or someone who's lived here for many years and doesn't get much for their tax dollar, or if this is a man or a woman, but this rule is on the books and there will be no exceptions... except the ones stated and the new ones to come along.

Speaking of mail boxes, the only damage they ever sustain is from snow plows. If they fall over in July because of a strong breeze, they're propped up with 2x4s, branches, or yarn just to keep them up until winter. Then the morning after the first snowstorm, the phone rings, "Your !*@% snow plow driver hit my mail box and ruined it." They want a brand new mail box, a wrought iron post with fancy scroll work and a small but dignified aluminum sign on top. This mail box had been sitting on the same saw horse since the town was rolling snow with a team of horses, but according to the caller, this was just like new, suspended on new pressure-treated timbers, and replacing was the least the town could do. I explain the New Rules that have no exceptions. The caller says, "We'll see about that!" Ten minutes later a selectman calls and strongly suggests that we replace the box because this person has done a lot for the town -- exception # ?

And on it goes, spring, summer, fall and winter. Year after year the Highway Department plugs along doing what needs to be done -- with suggestions that are not acted upon, decisions that aren't made, and rules that are as rigid as cooked spaghetti.

All the while you carry on running the show knowing it's the easiest job in town. It must be the easiest because no matter who the person is, he knows a better way to do it, a more important job that needs doing, and a quicker way to get it done.

If you don't believe it, ask my boss -- the kid over there with the red wagon. He told me we'd better fix that pot hole in front of his house -- it's big enough to swallow a bus.

The above narrative was written by Chum Cleverly, a New Hampshire Road Agent and member of the Technology Transfer Center advisory board. ■

Work Zone Fatalities Still Climbing

Are you and your crew sitting ducks?

During 1987, 701 fatalities occurred in work zones. This was 10 more than in 1986, a 1.4 percent increase. After a significant rise in fatalities from 489 in 1982 to 703 in 1984, the number has remained relatively stable at about 700 per year for the last 3 years.

Work zone fatalities on the Interstate system have increased from 121 in 1982 to 208 in 1987. In 1987, work zone fatalities on the Interstate system accounted for 30 percent of all work zone deaths [NOTE: this means that you fall within the other 70 percent of all work zone deaths]. By comparison, other Interstate fatalities accounted for less than 10 percent of all highway accidents.

HELP! Information Sought On Signing

We're collecting your good ideas again

FHWA is looking to prepare a handbook on new innovative techniques, equipment, and materials for fabricating, installing, and maintaining highway signs. We are looking for cost-saving or time-saving devices or procedures that can be documented and shared with others.

Examples of innovations could be:
- A device to prevent vandalism or theft
- A cost-effective procedure for recycling sign backing material.
- New equipment for removing broken or bent sign posts.

If you know of any such innovation, please contact Hugh W. McGee at Bellomo-McGee, Inc., 8330 Boone Boulevard, Suite 700, Vienna, Virginia, 22182 or call him at (703) 847-3071.

About This Publication

Road Business is a local roads Technical Newsletter. It is written for New Hampshire’s town and city employees who are responsible for planning and managing low volume roads. Send comments, questions, or suggestions to:

Technology Transfer Center
University of New Hampshire
Department of Civil Engineering
Durham, NH 03824

WANTED

Public Works Director, Lancaster, NH

New Position

Responsible for Water, Sewer, Highway and Sanitation. Qualification at least 6 years progressively responsible experience in those areas. Good knowledge of engineering principles in related field. Prefer some formal education in engineering or equivalent or administration. Pleasant working environment, good benefits, and competitive salary.

Send Resume to: Donald E. Crane, Town Manager, PO Box 151, Lancaster, NH 03584, or call the town office at 778-3391.

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