

# Lincoln Diesel Shop News



AUGUST | 2010

## Close to his heart

Lynn Goering remembers the long drives vividly.

During the 1990s, when she traveled to Stromsburg, Neb., to visit her parents, she would choose routes adjacent to rail lines. Her young son, Matthew, was fascinated with trains, and the sight of them along the highway brought him some relief from some of the less-enjoyable circumstances that dominated his young life.

Lynn later planned railroad-friendly routes to Omaha, as she drove her son to the University of Nebraska Medical Center for medical tests and treatment.

For her, the smiles coaxed from Matthew by the trains they spotted along the way made the longer trips worthwhile.

In June 1993, when he was 18 months old, Matthew was diagnosed with hepatoblastoma, an uncommon form of liver cancer. The grapefruit-sized tumor doctors discovered on Matthew's liver began a dizzying ordeal of hospitals, needles, transfusions and operations during his early years.

But there were bright spots for Matthew — particularly, his first visit to the Lincoln Diesel Shop in 1997, when he was 5, and the half-dozen subsequent visits during the next two years.

In June, Matthew graduated from Lincoln Southeast High School, and will attend Southeast Community College this fall. Although memories of those early trips to the shop have faded

with time for Matthew, they seem like yesterday to his mother.

"The visits to the shop always lifted his spirits, and he was always excited to come out and see the locomotives and his friends," Lynn said. "He loved it. The visits were a great diversion for all of us."

That first visit to the shop 14 years ago was set up by his mother's boss at the time. She put the Goerings in touch with Safety Assistant Gary Hughes, who helped show them around the facility.

Railroaders Matthew met during his visits were impressed with the young boy's knowledge of cars, locomotives and other things he saw at the shop. He was showered with railroad-themed gifts, and left a lasting impression on everyone who met him.

"About that time, BNSF began changing its locomotives to the orange and black paint schemes, which made



Matthew Goering checks out the cab of a locomotive with Penny Stovall during one of his early visits to the shop in 1997.



From left, Joe Valasquez, Gary Hughes, Matthew Goering and Al Hansen take a break during a shop visit in the late-1990s.

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them look like big pumpkins,” Hughes recalled. “There were people who worked here who didn’t know the term ‘pumpkin,’ and Matthew had to explain it to them.”

Whenever Matthew and his family visited the shop, employees always welcomed him with open arms, never tiring of his questions about trains.

Soon, he had his own hard hat, reflective belts, a BNSF jacket embroidered with his name and countless BNSF pins, trinkets and other keepsakes. He has kept almost all of them.

## A painful journey

Matthew’s journey was a long, often painful one. Soon after his cancer was diagnosed, he underwent a series of intravenous chemotherapy treatments. To avoid having to find a new vein for each treatment, a minor surgery was performed to insert an Infusa-Port into his chest, where it remained for about a year.

By September 1993, the tumor had grown significantly smaller and was surgically removed at UNMC. For the next few years, Matthew’s cancer was

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— Lynn Goering



Lynn Goering, left, Gary Hughes and Matthew Goering during the Goerings’ July 19 visit to the Lincoln Diesel Shop.

in remission, but his family’s hopes

were dashed in June 1996 when another tumor was discovered.

It became clear that a liver transplant was needed. A suitable donor finally was found and on April 9, 1997, Matthew received a new liver.

After his transplant, visitors to his hospital bedside in Omaha included Lincoln Diesel Shop employees, who never forgot to add to his growing railroad memorabilia collection.

Although his recovery was not without complications, Matthew braved them all, and a few months later, in August 1997, he began the next leg of his journey: his first day of kindergarten.

Matthew’s fascination with the railroad continued. He went through four or five electric train sets, and studied various books, catalogs and calendars to learn about cars and locomotives. He and his family took rides on a train between Fremont and Hooper, and visited a railroad museum in California

with help from the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Matthew even became an honorary member of the Railroad Diesel Mechanics Union.

## The next stretch

Matthew and his mother visited the Lincoln Diesel Shop July 19 for the first time since 1997.

“It’s strange to see these photos,” Matthew said while looking through a photo album Hughes keeps at his desk. “I actually do remember some of these things, but I was so young.”

The next stretch of Matthew’s journey begins this fall at college. For now, he enjoys playing baseball — he played outfield for the J.C. Brager Legion team this summer — and working out and spending time with his friends. He also has worked in the produce department at Hy-Vee for almost two years.

But through all his smooth and bumpy travels, some of his favorite stops along the way were his visits to the Lincoln Diesel Shop.

“I’m not nearly as crazed about trains as I was then,” Matthew said. “But every time I see one pass by, it still catches my eye a little longer than most people. They still stir a little something in me.”

Lincoln Diesel Shop News appears under direction of the shop superintendent. For news coverage, contact Chuck at the newsletter office by phone at BNSF 458-7342, 402-475-6397, fax 402-475-6398, mail information to 1845 S. 11th ST., Lincoln, NE 68502-2211, or e-mail chuck@newslink.com. This material is intended to be an overview of the news of the shop. If there are any discrepancies between this newsletter and any collective bargaining process, insurance contracts or other official documents, those documents will govern. BNSF continues to maintain and reserves the right, at any time, to alter, suspend, discontinue or terminate all plans and programs described in this newsletter. This newsletter is not an employment contract or any type of employment guarantee.

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