

A Vice President Speaks

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BMWED Journal - March/April 2010

BMWED In Transition

Transition - you will likely hear that word pretty often over the next couple of months. The BMWED Second Regular Convention will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada in June and the theme will be "*Transition to the Future*".

It has been nearly three years since President Simpson brought all of your National Division officers and staff together to work on an issue that he felt was of utmost importance. "Build a plan that assures our membership that they will have a strong and vibrant union going into the future," was the message. President Simpson and your National Division officers knew that the age demographic is such that over the next ten years an entirely new generation would be taking over the leadership of our union. Consequently, a plan was created that assures a smooth transition for our union as the older generation of officers and staff retire and a new generation move to the forefront. And one major theme came out of those meetings - educate.

If you ask any of your older union leaders what preparation was given for their position with the union his or her most likely response might be "none." I think it is fair to say most are self educated in the techniques needed to adequately represent our membership. However, it would be unfair not to recognize that there have been some educational opportunities provided along the way. This kind of history should not be repeated and that is why your union is actively encouraging our younger members to participate and take advantage of the educational in union leadership that are being provided by your National Division and some of the System Federations. We must continue to encourage and educate our future leadership for the sake of our own survival.

During convention our theme, *Transition to the Future*, will play a very prominent role. This will probably be evident to those in attendance just by

looking into the faces of those attending. For many, maybe most, it will be their last convention and there will almost certainly be a lot of fresh new faces.

Like many of our delegates, my thoughts will naturally drift toward memories of those who encouraged my participation and helped instill that pride in me that I have for this Brotherhood. For me it will be a number of older railroaders who brought me along and taught me a lot, not just about railroading but also about how important it is to participate and keep our union strong. But mostly, I will be thinking about a number of my family members, railroaders themselves.

What transition means to me is the way my parents Harold and Mary Tanner passed along to me, and my brother, their appreciation for the BMWED. My father, Harold, like his father Walter, worked as a Section Laborer and Foreman for the Union Pacific Railroad, and he also served as Secretary-Treasurer of BMWED Local Lodge 918 for nearly two decades. My mother, Mary, worked as a railroad Telegrapher and Operator and had her own appreciation for railroad tradition as well as an appreciation for what the BMWED has meant to our family. Transition to me is when my father was preparing for retirement and my brother Terry, a Track Inspector, was elected to fill that position as our Local Lodge Secretary-Treasurer. That appreciation we all felt for the BMWED intensified when we lost Terry in a railroad accident in 1985.

Most of us have our own personal stories about someone who helped guide our future in one way or another. As we lay the groundwork this summer for the direction of our union over the next four years, I hope our senior members there and at home will share their stories and seriously think about how we move our union forward. And to our younger members I ask that you soak up the knowledge around you, become active, get involved and support our union.