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## My Tribute to Lloyd Flem

*Chuck Mott, Past President/Chairman AAWA*

*December 14, 2019*

Today I celebrate Lloyd Flem's 35 years of faithful, tireless and exemplary service, as Executive Director, ALL BOARD WASHINGTON. It was my privilege, as President, to hire Lloyd Flem, with then the Washington Association of Railroad Passengers (WashARP), in Board Member Tom Martin's home, December, 1985. I doubt there is anyone here today, other than perhaps Rocky Shay, and of course, Lloyd, who were at that board meeting, to witness one of the best decisions our fledgling passenger rail advocacy organization made, in those halcyon days; which was to hire Lloyd as our full time Executive Director. No other state rail passenger advocacy organizations had an executive director. But to expand state transportation interests to include passenger trains services, we needed a gavel-to-gavel, presence in Olympia, because this was where the power and money resided.

Lloyd was the man! He had the credentials having served as Executive Director, Washington State Farmers Market Association. He lived in Olympia and we could afford him – which wasn't a whole lot of money at that time. In those early years, he supplemented his income working at his one acre organic vegetable garden, supplying local restaurants with garden fresh vegetables in the morning and putting on a suit and working the legislative halls in the afternoon, advocating state supported rail passenger train services. His first job was to get the State and Amtrak to return passenger train service, between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C., to serve the 1986 World's Fair. We didn't get our Vancouver, B.C. train, but Lloyd had already drawn favorable attention to our organization and mission, which was to bring more passenger trains to Washington State. It would be a steep grade ahead but he had already established a rail passenger advocacy presence in Olympia!

So what were some other reasons why we needed Lloyd in Olympia? Before I answer this important question, let me briefly digress. It was nearly fifty years ago Congress passed legislation, creating Amtrak, a new government corporation, tasked to remove the nation's freight railroads from their public need and necessity obligations, operating their dwindling number of money losing intercity passenger trains. However, the folks in the Nixon Administration, and most legislators, saw Amtrak as the designated undertaker, tasked to mercifully handle the demise and burial of the remaining passenger trains, leaving only fading memories of a bygone golden era.

But the American passenger trains refused to die! Amtrak began refurbishing badly worn passenger train rolling stock, inherited from the freight railroads, and putting them back into service. As a result, more people began riding passenger trains again. Following the 1973 fuel shortage crisis, Congress decided maybe we needed passenger trains after all. So beginning in the mid- 1970's and into the early 1980's, they funded the purchase of new passenger train equipment. Ridership rose and new intercity passenger train routes were added. Some of the states, such as California, Illinois and some Eastern States, were now looking into setting up state supported regional passenger train services, to supplement Amtrak's scanty intercity passenger train network. But Washington State was then not one of them. Our then Washington State Highway Department had only one employee doing railroad work. He was Jim Jackson, whose half time job was to keep track of all rail line track abandonments occurring in Washington State, resulting from the passage of the 1980 Staggers Act, which deregulated the railroads and allowed them to abandoned unwanted tracks.

Lloyd's mission was clear. The "state highway only" culture in Olympia needed to change, but it wouldn't be easy. There was a legislative proposal to consider running a passenger train to Vancouver, B.C, but the proposal was derisively considered during a Transportation Committee hearing. Fortunately, a couple or three courageous legislators hung in there and were able to get a study approved and funded. The conclusion was that trains were nice, but not many people would ride them and, besides, they would be too costly. However, "More studies would be useful".

The strategy for success was simple and straightforward. It was to be bi-partisan, work equally well with both sides of the aisle and recognize the importance of a "Praise and Push" agenda, a phrase Lloyd himself coined, that describes his success in working with elected legislators and transportation decision makers. He worked tirelessly in support of legislation to support the creation of the Rail Development Commission. When it was determined the Commission would address regional, transit and freight railroads, but not intercity passenger trains, thanks to then revered Seattle Council President and WashARP member George Benson, Lloyd and I were asked to give a "short course" to the RDC on intercity passenger trains. We did so and intercity passenger rail was added to the work plan.

The old State Highway Department became the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). A Rail Division was established and it was blessed with a very capable, competent and dedicated management team that included Jim Slakey, Jim Toohey, Ken Uznaski, Ray Allred, Jeff Schulz and others. Lloyd met regularly with these men and other members of WSDOT, and key rail passenger proponent legislators in the early years, such as Senator Jeanette Wood, Representative George Walk and the late rail transit and leading legislative passenger rail advocate, Representative Ruth Fisher. Lloyd and I will never forget our journey over the "Bridge," between the WSDOT Building and the House Office Building, to meet with Representative Ruth Fisher, to discuss our concerns the WSDOT's rail passenger program was not on track! The chain smoking, fiery Representative listened to us for about 30 seconds and then said she had heard enough! She slapped her hands hard on her desk and said she would take our concerns from there. And indeed she did!

Right after we left she had a meeting with WSDOT officials that very afternoon! We know because we heard about it the very next day, when Lloyd was greeted by some very red faced folks! But good changes came quickly. Gil Mallory was brought in to spearhead the fledgling, developing state rail office. His contributions to the state rail passenger program and later, Amtrak, are now legendary!

Lloyd was a key person in the development of the Olympia/Lacey Centennial Station. He served as the Amtrak Depot Committee's secretary and liaison with WSDOT, Amtrak and BNSF Railway. This extraordinary privately funded grass roots passenger train station building project, under the leadership of the late Maurice "Buck" Harmon, along with strong commitments from WashARP members George Barner and Rich DeGarmo, all made it happen. In 1993, Lloyd's efforts resulted in a very special, quite unique and happy reward! Immediately prior to the opening of the Olympia/Lacey Centennial Station, the temporary wooden boards covering the windows were removed, the station's night lighting was turned on for the first time and the doors were opened, also for first time use, to host Lloyd and Darleen Flem's wedding! Following their nuptial ceremony, with loud cheers, exclaimed well wishes and vigorous hand clapping coming from happy wedding guests, including yours truly, Lloyd and Darleen boarded an Amtrak train at the station to go on their honeymoon.

Perhaps the crowning achievement of Lloyd's long, industrious and eventful career was his important role in bringing modern passenger trains to the Amtrak Cascades Rail Passenger Train Corridor. Thanks to the efforts of the late Hal Cooper, Jr., PhD; who was able to convince ABB, a Swiss-Swedish manufacturer of high-end, high-tech tilting X-2000 passenger trains, to bring their train, then touring in America, out to Washington State. I personally hosted ABB Traction Inc's, Joe Sillien, VP Business Development, to meet with state legislators and WSDOT officials and talk to them about the advantages operating this mechanically tilting passenger train on the curvy tracks in the Pacific Northwest. On very short notice, Lloyd was able to persuade the chairpersons of both the Senate and House Transportation Committees, then currently meeting in session, to show a 20 minute video of the X-2000 train operating in Sweden and invite Mr. Sillien to explain the many features and merits this train could bring to Washington intercity passenger service. Subsequently, the State Legislature approved legislation, authorizing the WSDOT to issue a request for a quotation, for the purchase of a new tilting passenger trainset. Both ABB and Talgo, Inc. bid on the trains, with Talgo getting the winning bid. That was the beginning of Washington State's participation, along with the State of Oregon, in the development of the very successful Amtrak Cascade Corridor, now providing multiple daily passenger train services between Vancouver, B.C. and Eugene, OR and serving Seattle and Portland in between. Subsequently, Lloyd worked with Bob Bregent, manager of the Centennial Station Project, and Secretary of State, Ralph Munro, to help bring the Spanish built Talgo to Washington State. Mr. Munro was also instrumental in inviting, then Spanish Crown Prince Philip VI, now the King of Spain, to Washington State, to thank state officials, and also Lloyd and myself, for buying the Spanish-built train and bringing it here.

In conclusion, I suppose a book could be written describing Lloyd Flem's unfailing, loyal and exemplary efforts devoted to the Washington Association of Railroad

Passengers, now All Aboard Washington's mission, which was successfully supporting, growing and thriving rail passenger train services in Washington. Lloyd would very modestly credit so much of his success to many other people who helped contributed to his efforts. But in reality, he was the one who inspired, pushed and directed the efforts to get things done! Some of those people included his wonderful and very supportive wife, Darleen, the late Jim Hamre and Zack Willhoite (who were both killed in that horrible December 18, 2017 DuPont passenger train accident), Loren Herrigstad, Bob Lawrence, Bruce Agnew and myself – as his boss and colleague for 23 years. Other people, who helped in Lloyd's success, in addition to people already reference herein, include the late Hans Mueller, State Senators Pat Patterson, Mary Margaret Haugen and Dan Swecker. Also, the late Representative, Al Swift, former Leavenworth Mayor Rob Eaton, who is now with Amtrak, Mark Foutch, Olympia Mayor and former WSDOT Secretaries Sid Morrison and Paula Hammond. Other folks, who Lloyd worked closely with, include railroad painting illustrator, J. Craig Thorpe, and Tony Trifiletti, Past President AAWA, BNSF, rail labor, Amtrak, WSDOT and Talgo.

Now nearing retirement, Lloyd Flem works with AAWA President, Harvey Bowen; John Carlin, Treasurer; Rocky Shay, Secretary; Robert Lawrence, Membership; Patrick Carnahan, Newsletter Editor, Charles Hamilton, Communications Director, and Warren Yee, E –Newsletter. Lloyd will pass his mantle on to Government Affairs Director, Luis Moscoso. We wish Luis great success as he now carries on the work into the future, that Lloyd so ably accomplished in the past!

Lloyd's achievements have been widely recognized over many years with receipt of numerous awards and accolades from numerous public, civic and private organizations and corporations. Among them was the national Rail Passenger Association's prestigious John R. Martin Award, personally awarded to Lloyd in Washington, D.C. May 1, 2007, in national recognition for his stellar work in promoting passenger train travel. BNSF Railway's, D. J. Mitchell, VP Passenger Rail Operations, has stated Lloyd's work, in cooperation with his company operations in Washington State, is the best in the country!

It has been my great pleasure, special privilege and distinct honor to work with Lloyd Flem, as All Aboard Washington's President and Chairman, December, 1985 to November, 2008 and to be a close personal friend, as well.

I propose a toast to Lloyd Flem and his wonderful wife, Darleen, for their many happy, healthful and fulfilling years as they move toward well-deserved retirement.

Bon Voyage!

Chuck Mott  
Past President/Chairman, All Aboard Washington  
Past Director, Rail Passengers Association.  
President, All Aboard Arizona