

# ALASKA RAILROAD

## News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### A carman and a conductor mark a century of service *Two Alaska Railroad employees reach 50-year work anniversaries in 2018*



ANCHORAGE, Alaska – Two Alaska Railroad (ARRC) employees reach 50-year work anniversaries in 2018, marking a century of service between them. To celebrate the rarity, ARRC honored Carman Writer / Inspector Charles R. Dillard Jr. and Conductor / Brakeman Harry Ross with a celebration March 29 at the Anchorage Historic Depot, where nearly 100 railroaders gathered to pay tribute.

Alaska Railroad President & CEO Bill O’Leary presented 50-year service award pins. “The railroad inspires employment longevity. About a fifth of our year-round employees have worked here for over 20 years. Even in that context, 50 years is extraordinary,” said O’Leary. “This is a good day, because we get to recognize two truly remarkable men.”

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“When I hear railroaders describe Charlie and Harry, they use words like ‘dedicated’ and ‘mentor’ – terms that speak to their character and roles on our railroad team,” said Chief Operating Officer Clark Hopp. “We wanted to provide a lasting thank-you that is fitting for their half-century milestones.”

Lasting recognition comes by way of naming two passenger railcars after Dillard and Ross, because both the carman and conductor work in and around passenger train equipment every day. Dining coach 452 is now *The Charles Dillard Coach*, and dining coach 401 is now *The Harry Ross Coach*. Both coaches operate in passenger trains year-round, including the *Aurora Winter Train* parked beside the depot March 29. Dillard and Ross led the way onboard to check out newly installed plaques identifying each dining car’s new name.

Conductor Ross spends most of his time working aboard a train. Carman Dillard works in, under and around railcars in a cavernous car shop. While their work environments differ, both men perform mission-essential jobs for the railroad. Both men also chose their respective careers early and stuck within the same railroad career field for the five-decade duration.

Ross chose railroad transportation (train operations) when the Alaska Railroad hired him as a Student Brakeman on May 21, 1968. He became a full-fledged Brakeman in 1970 and added Conductor to his skills the following year. From 1979 to 1984, he oversaw train operations in the Anchorage Yard, first as a Yardmaster Trainee, then as a Yardmaster. In 1985, he resumed Conductor / Brakeman duties and remained in this position ever since.



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Known as “HR” and “the singing conductor,” Ross is a lifelong Alaskan with a love of the blues and boating. He particularly enjoys working the railroad’s *Coastal Classic* train with service from Anchorage to Seward, where he had kept a boat.

Dillard chose a mechanical career, maintaining railcars. He joined the Alaska Railroad as an Apprentice Carman on July 12, 1965. Dillard took a 2-1/2 year break from the railroad in 1967-1969, and returned as a Freight Car Carman in early 1970. Within a couple of months, he was promoted to Car Inspector. In 1990, ARRC promoted Dillard to Carman Leader. He has served in his current position as Carman Writer / Inspector since April 2007.

Originally hailing from Alabama, Dillard is a second-generation railroader (his father, Charles Sr., was an Illinois Central Railroad conductor for 39 years). The U.S. Army brought Dillard to Alaska for the first time in 1961. He left military service and returned to Alabama in 1964, but headed back to Alaska the next year, following a railroad job lead.

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MORE PHOTOS AND STORY / INTERVIEW SOURCES ARE AVAILABLE:

Charles Dillard



Harry Ross

