



Alaska Railroad Corporation *News Release*

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Alaska Railroad employee marks half-century on the job *Track Repairer / Board Member Jack Burton is second 50-year railroader*

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Railroad Track Repairer and Board Member Jack Burton recently passed the half-century mark as an employee of the Alaska Railroad (ARRC). Railroad leadership recognized Burton's extraordinary tenure with a salute during the ARRC Board of Directors meeting today, November 13.

Burton joined the Alaska Railroad as a track laborer in April 1964, just one month after the massive Good Friday earthquake struck, wreaking havoc on railroad infrastructure in south central Alaska. Over the past five decades, Burton has built, fixed or maintained the railway corridor in one capacity or another. As a member of the ARRC's Maintenance-of-Way (MOW) department, he has hammered spikes, operated specialized on-track heavy equipment, inspected track, and led track gangs and section crews as a foreman.

He has put his experience to work on several major railroad projects involving the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT/PF). He was ARRC's coordinator/liaison on ADOT/PF's Bird-to-Girdwood road and track realignment project 1994-1998; ARRC's traffic control representative on the Whittier Tunnel project 1998-2000; and ARRC's coordinator/liaison on the ADOT/PF Bird Flats road construction project in the early 2000s.

Burton was president of Local 183 Alaska Railroad Workers (ARW) / American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) for 14 years, between 1980 and 1994. The year Burton stepped down from his union leadership position, Alaska Governor Walter Hickel appointed Burton to the ARRC Board of Directors. Since July 6, 1994, Burton has offered guidance and governance to the railroad, again with the welfare of railroaders in mind — his board seat specifically represents the railroad employees. Burton was last re-appointed by Governor Sean Parnell in October 2012. His current term expires in October 2017



Jack Burton

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“Jack’s knowledge and leadership as a long-time railroader and experienced director has helped to keep us stay on track (no pun intended!),” said ARRC Board Chair Linda Leary. “As new board members have come onboard, Jack remains a grounding force on the Board of Directors. He has served on a number of board committees over the years, including the Capital Projects and Executive committees. But most notably, Jack has consistently provided leadership and sage advice during his long-standing service on the Board Real Estate committee, as we tackle challenges and take advantage of opportunities.”

Only one other railroad employee reached the 50-year employment milestone – Healy resident and area Roadmaster Steve Love, who retired shortly after celebrating 50 years in 2008. At the time, the ARRC Board renamed the Healy Siding the Love Siding. Similarly, because Burton has been a resident of Moose Pass since 1975, the siding there is now named the Jack Burton Siding.

“I can’t say enough about Jack’s contributions to the governance of the Alaska Railroad. His depth of experience and commitment has been invaluable to both the board and staff,” said President/CEO Bill O’Leary. “Jack’s sense of humor and seasoned insight have been key to finding answers to tough problems impacting our land, our employees and our infrastructure. Jack looks for win-win solutions as he works with all stakeholders, including the Department of Transportation, railroad departments, the community and our employees. We are lucky to have him.”

Originally hailing from Lake City, Tennessee, Burton arrived in Alaska in June 1955, when his father sought work in the state’s construction industry. Railroading has become a family affair among several of Jack’s siblings and children. Jack’s brothers Joe and Larry are both equipment operators / truck drivers supporting ARRC’s trailer/container-on-flat-car business (Joe joined ARRC in 1976 and Larry in 1986). Jack’s daughter Kelly worked for the railroad as a passenger train ticket agent based in Portage. Jack’s sons and grandson have followed in their father’s footsteps, working within MOW. Jack’s son Gordon repaired track from 1982 to 2000. Son Keith joined ARRC in 1985 and is currently an MOW section foreman. Keith’s son (Jack’s grandson) Scott joined ARRC in earlier this year as a track laborer.

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