

Anchorage, Alaska
September 30, 1949

Messrs. J. E. Manley, Actg. Asst. Gen. Mgr.
Paul Shelmerdine, Director of Personnel

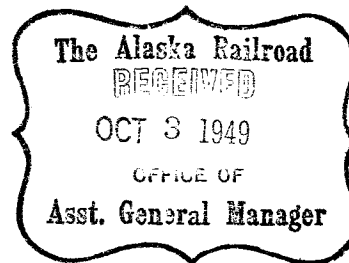
For your information, attached copy of letter to
Mr. Louis Grippio and investigation in regard to damage to
locomotive 401.

It is recommended that this man not be re-hired.



G. A. Benedict
Supt., M.P. & E.

Attachments 2



Anchorage, Alaska

September 30, 1949

Mr. Louis Grippo
I.D. 36768
Laborer
The Alaska Railroad
Anchorage, Alaska

The investigation held in Office of Superintendent of Motive Power and Equipment at 10:00 A.M. Thursday, September 29, 1949, definitely establishes the fact of your inability to carry out instructions issued by your supervisor, negligency and incompetency of your failure to check water level in Engine 401 before lighting fire, resulting in severe damage to fire box.

Your application for employment is therefore disapproved as per Rule 24-A of the Working Agreement, and effective this date you are dismissed from the service of The Alaska Railroad.

G. A. Benedict
Supt., Motive Power & Equip.

THE ALASKA RAILROAD
Anchorage, Alaska

September 29, 1949

MECHANICAL DEPARTMENT

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION HELD IN OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF MOTIVE POWER AND EQUIPMENT SEPTEMBER 29, 1949 at 10:00 A.M. TO DETERMINE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DAMAGE TO LOCOMOTIVE 401 THE AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 22, 1949.

Those Present: Mr. G. A. Benedict, Supt. of M.P.&E.
 Mr. Kenneth Smith, Roundhouse Foreman
 Mr. William F. Brady, Roundhouse Foreman
 Mr. Jesse F. Wallace, Roundhouse Foreman
 Mr. Louis Grippe, Laborer
 Mr. John Shaw
 Mr. Edgar Russell
 Mr. C. E. Marcott, Machinist

GAB: This investigation is being held to determine the responsibility for damage to Locomotive 401 in the afternoon of September 22, 1949. Did you receive proper notification of this investigation, Mr. Grippe?

IG: Yes, sir.

GAB: Do you have any representatives of your own choosing?

IG: Yes, Mr. Shaw and Mr. Russell.

GAB: How long have you worked for The Alaska Railroad?

IG: Two months.

GAB: What is your rate?

IG: Laborer, at \$1.98 per hour.

GAB: What do your duties consist of in the Roundhouse?

IG: With the new rate, they are to grease and watch engines.

GAB: Have you received any instructions from your foreman regarding locomotives under steam?

IG: No, sir.

GAB: Did you receive any instructions on firing up locomotives?

IG: No.

GAB: Did you receive any instructions on checking water level on engines?

IG: Just what I picked up myself by watching others.

GAB: Have you had any previous railroad experience?

IG: No.

GAB: The foreman never gave you any instructions?

IG: No.

GAB: Were you instructed to fire up Engine 401 on Thursday afternoon, September 22?

IG: I was told to get the 401 ready for No. 25.

GAB: What did you do to carry out these instructions?

IG: I went to the 401 and put the coal in, and the other laborer and I threw in solvent and waste and lit it up. I shoveled more coal in, but didn't look at the gauge. I did not look at the water. After I lit it up, I asked the other laborer if there was any water in it. He said not that he knew of. The other laborer put the hose up and put water in it. About eight minutes had gone by.

GAB: How long did you leave the water on?

IG: I don't exactly know. It didn't come inside of the glass. That was when the foreman came. It started to make a peculiar noise a little while after we had put water in it. The foreman came in and told me to drop the fire. I pulled the grates and dropped fire.

GAB: How long was the fire burning before you dropped it?

IG: About eight or ten minutes. I don't think it was any more.

GAB: Are you quite sure you only had it going eight or ten minutes?

IG: That's all it seems to me. I didn't exactly time it.

GAB: Was there water running in the boiler when the foreman showed up?

ES: Yes. He said to turn it off and drop fire.

GAB: Mr. Smith, you were on duty as foreman September 22 at the Roundhouse?

ES: Yes.

GAB: You recall this event, I suppose?

ES: Yes.

GAB: Had you ever given Mr. Grippe any instructions regarding firing up locomotives or of the danger involved in it?

ES: I didn't think it was necessary. Mr. Wallace had informed me he had instructed both these laborers how to fire up locomotives.

GAB: You have an order book in the Roundhouse in which you foremen give each other various information regarding the engines. Was there anything about the 401 being washed and no water being in boiler?

ES: The order was to get it ready to fire up.

GAB: Did you go up in the cab and check on the water level?

ES: No.

GAB: You knew this engine had been washed?

ES: Yes.

GAB: Isn't it customary for the foreman to check on water before engines are fired here?

ES: Yes.

GAB: Have you any reason for not checking engine?

ES: It is not supposed to be fired before I check it.

GAB: What instructions did you give this boy?

ES: I told him to get the engine ready for firing.

GAB: You did not tell him to fire it?

KS: No, sir.

GAB: Had he ever fired up any other engines?

ES: I do not know, but his name is in the fire builder's book, and I assumed he had.

GAB: What is the purpose of that book?

ES: Every time you fire up an engine, the foreman and man who fired it up have to sign the book.

GAB: Are there places in the book to show that water was checked?

ES: Yes.

GAB: You check the book and O.K. the water before an engine is to be fired?

ES: Yes.

GAB: Did you know about this book, Grippe?

EG: I signed the book, but I did not fire the engine.

GAB: You did not?

EG: Previously, the other laborer had fired the engine; it was after 12:00 m.n. and he was gone. I didn't think it made any difference if I signed it. I put the hose on the boiler and had as much to do with it as he did. This is in regard to the time when Mr. Smith states my name was in the fire book. Regarding the 401, I lit the fire, but I didn't sign the book before I lit it.

GAB: Is it customary to sign the book before you light the fire?

EG: Well, the last one I signed the book because the other man had gone home. I did not sign the book on the 401, but I lit the fire.

GAB: You know the instructions with regard to signing the book before lighting the fire?

EG: No.

GAB: Mr. Smith, were your men instructed to sign the book before lighting a fire?

ES: That is the way it has been.

GAB: Mr. Brady, did Mr. Smith relieve you at the close of your working day?

WFB: Yes.

GAB: Did you have a note in the order book that there was no water in the boiler of the 401?

WFB: No.

GAB: Why not?

WFB: I just didn't have it in there.

GAB: Do you usually put it down if there is no water in the boiler?

WFB: I haven't been. It is customary to check the water before building a fire.

ER: Mr. Grippo, how long have you worked in the R roundhouse?

LG: Two months.

ER: How many times have you fired locomotives?

LG: Just once.

ER: You signed the book the other time, but did not fire the engine?

LG: That's right.

ER: Did Mr. Wallace or Mr. Smith instruct you?

LG: They did not instruct me.

ER: Mr. Brady, is it customary for laborers to fire locomotives?

WFB: Yes, it is.

ER: How long has this been the custom?

WFB: Since the first of September, 1949.

ER: Since about the time Mr. Grippo came to work?

WFB: Since after he came to work.

ER: Who fired the boilers before September 1 on the dead engines?

WFB: The hostler or hostler helper.

ER: Were you given written instructions to allow the laborers to fire the boilers?

WFB: No, not written.

ER: Verbal?

WFB: Yes.

ER: From whom?

WFB: I believe from Mr. Benedict.

ER: Is that correct, Mr. Benedict?

GAB: It could be.

ER: Mr. Marcott, you worked in The Alaska Railroad roundhouse how long?

GM: Ever since approximately October, 1946.

ER: About three years?

GM: Yes.

WFB: In what capacity did you work in the Roundhouse of The Alaska Railroad?

GM: As machinist and roundhouse foreman.

ER: Having been foreman, you are familiar with the practice of washing boilers and getting engines ready for the road?

GM: I should be.

ER: Was it the past practice, as Mr. Brady says, up until September 1, to have hostlers and hostler helpers fire boilers?

GM: They used to, yes.

ER: Is there a purpose in having a hostler or hostler helper fire boilers?

GM: Technically speaking, yes.

ER: What is the technical reason?

CM: A fireman ordinarily first looks at the water. Then he checks his fire. An inexperienced man although a laborer can be just as experienced as a fireman if he has been on the job and properly instructed.

ER: Is it the customary practice in the States for laborers to build fires?

CM: Yes. They also have fire builders for that purpose alone, who receive a slightly higher rate than a laborer.

ER: On what roads?

CM: The Wabash, Missouri Pacific, New York Central. At least prior to 1939. There is usually a differential paid above the laborer's pay to coincide with the same rate of pay or same differential as the Federal Inspector or men who sign the records.

GAB: I disagree with Mr. Marcott on that, as laborers and wipers on roads I have worked for were paid the same rate. There was no differential for building fires. A wiper's duty was to fire engines, and this I know as I worked with wipers and laborers.

ER: Why did hostler helpers build fires in the past?

CM: I don't know.

ER: Could it be they are qualified to be firemen before they can be hostlers?

CM: Yes.

ER: I believe The Alaska Railroad rules and regulations in the working agreements state hostlers must have one year of working experience as firemen. Therefore, if a hostler had scorched the boiler as Mr. Grippe had done, he would be responsible for it in himself. Am I correct?

CM: I guess so.

ER: Mr. Shaw, have you any questions?

JS: Mr. Smith, mention was made of another laborer who helped Mr. Grippe at the time the 401 was fired up. His name has not been mentioned. What is his name?

ES: A. G. Keough.

JE: He is an employee of The Alaska Railroad?

ES: Yes.

JS: How long has he been working here?

WFB: About the same length of time as Mr. Grippio.

JS: Are his duties approximately the same as Mr. Grippio's?

WFB: Yes.

JS: From your own knowledge, was he working with Mr. Grippio at the time Engine 401 was fired?

ES: No.

JS: Was he on duty?

ES: No. He did not get to the Boardhouse until 4:30 p.m.

JS: At what time was fire applied to the 401?

ES: I don't know. Between 4:00 and 5:00 p.m.

JS: Are you sure Mr. Keough was not present when the engine was fired?

ES: So he (Keough) told me.

JS: Mr. Grippio, was Mr. Keough present at the time Engine 401 was fired?

LG: Yes.

JS: He helped you with the building of the fire and doing other work?

LG: Yes.

GAB: At whose request did he help you?

LG: He came in late. I was watching engines and was there about a quarter to five when I started working on it. I had about four engines that night to watch. He was exactly there at 4:30 p.m., but the 401 was not fired until 5:00 p.m.

GAB: But I asked you at whose request did he help you?

LG: No one's request. He usually does. We have been helping each other. We have other duties beside watching engines.

JS: When he was present when the fire was started in the engine?

IG: Yes.

JS: You stated you signed the book?

IG: Yes, the fire book.

GAB: Before or after the fire was built?

IG: No, no fire book was signed. I thought you were speaking of the other time. If Mr. Keough had not been there, I would have known nothing about the water. He suggested looking at the water. I would have continued firing it and not known the difference.

JS: Do you know where Engine 401 is now?

IG: No, sir.

JS: Mr. Benedict, have you seen the 401?

GAB: Yes.

JS: Is it damaged severely?

GAB: Yes.

GAB: Mr. Grippo, it is previously stated in this investigation that you understood Mr. Smith to say you were to get Engine 401 ready to fire up?

IG: Yes.

GAB: But he did not tell you to fire it up?

IG: No.

GAB: That is the first engine you fired up?

IG: Yes.

GAB: You did that on your own?

IG: Yes.

GAB: You were not told to fire the engine up?

IG: No.

GAB: It was not your intention, Mr. Smith, to have him light the engine until you had inspected it?

KS: That is correct.

GAB: Mr. Wallace, you did give this boy instructions regarding the firing up of engines and the danger of firing up engines?

JFW: Yes. He fired up one engine for me.

GAB: He said he did not. He did fire up one for you then?

JFW: Yes.

EAB: For you, Mr. Smith?

KS: No.

GAB: What instructions did you give him?

JFW: To be sure there was water in the boiler.

GAB: Mr. Grippe, do you recall that?

LG: He told me about putting water in engines, but no specific instructions. I didn't understand about the fire. When Mr. Wallace says about firing engines, that night I did not fire the engine. Like I said, I signed the book but I just put the hose on it.

GAB: Did you sign the book for the 401?

LG: No.

GAB: You made the statement before you had never fired an engine.

LG: I hadn't.

GAB: Then why did you sign the book?

LG: I didn't think it made any difference. As I said, I helped him (the other laborer), and he left at 12:00 a.m.

GAB: Do you recall the instructions Mr. Wallace gave you?

LG: He just said about putting water in the engines, yes.

EE: This other laborer, Mr. Keough, was present at the time the accident happened?

LG: Yes.

EE: And he has been firing up engines in the past?

LG: Yes.

ER: Was he there when Mr. Smith gave you instructions?

LG: No. He got there ten or fifteen minutes later.

ER: He got in the cab with you?

LG: Yes. He got the solvent.

ER: Is that the custom to use solvent for starting fires?

ES: No. They use waste.

ER: Mr. Keough was present and helped you put solvent on the waste into the engine of the 401?

GR: Yes, he spread it out.

ER: This Keough had fired other engines, Mr. Smith?

ES: Yes.

ER: He was present. It is obvious he did not look at the water gauge.

JG: This is an investigation to determine the responsibility according to the notice. Since it is for that purpose, we should have everyone present who can shed any knowledge on this. I think we should suspend and get Mr. Keough to get the facts.

GAB: Mr. Shaw, Mr. Grippe has admitted lighting the fire when he had no instructions to light it.

ER: He misinterpreted his instructions or perhaps he did not hear properly.

GAB: He said Smith told him to get it ready, but not to light the fire.

LG: As far as I can remember.

ER: What were your instructions?

LG: To get the engine ready for fire for No. 25.

ES: You thought it your duty to get the engine ready, fire it, and all the other duties?

LG: Yes.

GAB: Mr. Brady and Mr. Smith, have you ever instructed them to use solvent to light a fire?

WFB: No.

KS: No.

JB: Did you have any knowledge of them using it?

WFB: No.

KS: No.

ER: Mr. Marcott, do you have any knowledge of formerly lighting fires in locomotives with the use of solvent?

CM: Well, that comes under the heading as to what amount of fire you have to light in a period. All of our surplus waste is thrown into a receptacle. Out of the receptacle comes the foundation of the fire. Whatever is thrown into this, whether solvent, car oil, valve oil, or waste taken out of boxes which is saturated with such liquids, that is the foundation of the fire. But as far as going into the oil house to get any specified liquid for fire, I cannot remember any instructions for the use of highly inflammable liquids.

ER: Mr. Wallace, did you give these boys instructions as to not to use highly inflammable liquids?

JFW: Yes.

ER: Do you remember getting these instructions, Mr. Grippo?

IG: No.

CM: Outside of misunderstanding that has arisen, it seems like the fellow Keough is the key man. He has been doing the fire lighting all the time, hasn't he?

ES: No. No special man assigned to lighting fires.

CM: Well, this fellow Keough coming in late and assisting you in lighting the fire--neither one of you noticed the water glass?

IG: No.

CM: Was there a hose on the engine?

IG: On the front of the engine where you put pressure and air.

GM: Are you familiar with filling up boilers and getting ready to light fires?

IG: In which way?

GM: There are certain safety appliances and certain rules to be followed before the fire is built, for the safety of the engine. You are not familiar with any of them?

IG: No.

GAB: I think it is not too unreasonable to expect a laborer who has worked around engines for two months, to be qualified to light a fire in a locomotive. If the man had taken proper interest in his job, I don't think there was any occasion for this to happen.

ER: Mr. Smith, was there a hostler on duty at the time this engine was fired?

KS: Yes.

ER: Was the hostler helper on duty?

KS: Yes.

ER: Where were they?

KS: Taking the 1300 to the Yard Office.

ER: Is this a switch engine?

KS: Yes.

ER: How long does it usually take a hostler and helper to deliver an engine in the yard?

KS: Approximately 30 minutes.

ER: Did this 30 minute absence prevent them from getting the 401 ready, from firing up the boiler?

KS: A hostler does not fire up engines.

ER: Mr. Brady, you told me up to September 1, hostler helpers fired up the dead locomotives?

WFE: Yes, they had.

ER: Then both of you as foremen had started with laborers one month before?

WFB: Yes.

ES: Yes.

ER: And the experience Mr. Grippio could have had was limited to twenty-two days for firing locomotives?

WFB: Correct.

ES: Correct.

ER: Mr. Grippio, had you been notified that you were out of service at that time or shortly thereafter?

IG: No, sir.

ER: Have you been notified at any time you are out of service?

IG: No. The tinskeeper said he thought I was, but he wasn't sure. I asked the foreman, and he said he wasn't sure.

ER: Did anyone suggest to you that you resign?

IG: Yes.

ER: Who suggested to you that you resign?

IG: Mr. Brady.

ER: Can you recall approximately what he said?

IG: He said if I resigned, it would be better for me as it would be off my record. I wouldn't have to worry about getting another government job because of this accident.

ER: Is that correct?

WFB: Yes.

ER: Did you have any particular reason for telling him that?

WFB: No, I told him that as a friend.

JH: Mr. Smith, I am interested in how, since September 1, fire lighting has been handled. In every case where you told the laborers to go light a fire, have you made a personal check of the water or left it up to them? Which is the rule?

IG: I made a personal check of the water.

JS: You don't give the laborers that responsibility, tell them to go do it and forget about it?

JS: No.

MR: Did you do that when hostler helpers fired them?

JS: Yes.

GAB: Are there any further comments?

No answers.

Investigation closed at 11:20 a.m.

I certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief this is a true and correct transcription of the above investigation held at Anchorage on September 29, 1949.


Lois A. Lindemann
Lois A. Lindemann