



**Western Pacific
Railroad Company**
"THE FEATHER RIVER ROUTE"

Executive Office

526 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
Telephone 415 982-2100

March 10, 1981

Mr. Chuck Crouse
31 Englewood Avenue, #6
Brookline, Mass. 02146

Dear Mr. Crouse:

Please refer to your letter of March 21, 1981, regarding the Budd RDC cars.

My first experience with these cars was when I was an officer of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad and we bought sufficient cars to equip two "prospector trains", one to run in each direction overnight between Denver and Salt Lake. They worked out very successfully.

In regard to the particular run you mentioned, which was made with the Budd Car M-497 near Bryan, Ohio, we had a different purpose in mind.

The Pennsylvania Railroad was in the process of spending several million dollars to set up between Washington and New York their high-speed metroliner service. I was approached by the Secretary of Commerce Office to meet the high-speed runs that were being publicized by the Japanese Tokaido Line and the Pennsylvania. I told them that we had all the technology necessary, but that since we were losing over \$100 million on our passenger business and the Japanese Tokaido Line was losing hundreds of millions of dollars, and the Pennsylvania losses were greater than ours -- and furthermore that I know of no railroad passenger service in the world that was being operated at a profit -- I felt that we would be jeopardizing our entire railroad operations should we put more money into this type of travel.

They were told that in my desk was a file from our research center in Cleveland saying that for \$30,000 they could equip one of our Budd RDC cars, which were then running between New York and Poughkeepsie, with equipment which could get them up to a speed of 170 miles per hour. The people in Washington

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were skeptical, so I authorized our technical center to spend that amount of money which went principally for two second-hand jet engines which were placed on the roof of the car and a certain amount of streamlining for the rear end of the car.

We made a test run near Bryan, Ohio, on July 23, 1966. The track in that vicinity was actually substandard, for it did not have the welded rail nor heaviest rail section. The ballast was not the standard crushed rock. However, the advantage for the test was a long stretch of tangent track.

I rode in the cab and still have the helmet which was equipped so that we could communicate with the plane which ran ahead of the train to make sure that the grade crossings were being properly protected by the watchmen who were stationed at every crossing -- even though there was electrical protection. At Milepost 347+13 at Melbern, Ohio, an accurately measured 300-foot rail interval was equipped with spring loaded micro-switches which were activated by the cutting of a string extending across both rails.

The car operated over the 300-foot section in 1.112 seconds, resulting in a speed of 183.85 miles per hour. Secondary instrumentation indicated a speed of 183.7 miles per hour.

I have at home on my wall a photograph of the train while at Bryan and the attested statement of the speed attained on that trip.

The data is probably in the files of Conrail somewhere and Arthur Harrison, 109 Briggs Avenue, Yonkers, N. Y. 10701, may be able to give you more information on its location.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "A. E. Perlman / R". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and a stylized "P".

ALFRED E. PERLMAN