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The Bulletin

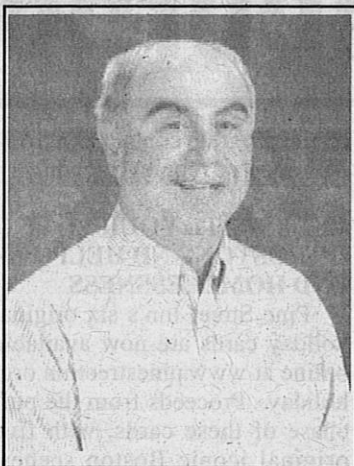
The end of an era: it's the rail thing

It was an eerie feeling a few weeks ago when driving over the Massachusetts Turnpike on Brighton's Market Street, I did not see even one freight car in the Beacon Yards abutting I-90 after decades of glimpses.

CSX, the previous owner of the huge rail yard, moved all of its containerized shipping—which basically was all that happened in recent years in Brighton—to a huge new facility in Westborough. I don't know if this is good news or bad news but Brighton will now be spared flatbed 18-wheelers hauling containers on its streets.

The T now takes over the trackage between Boston and Westborough, allowing Amtraks's Lake Shore Limited and a couple of New York bound trains on its rails. The former Beacon Yards, centrally located and therefore lucrative, will be developed probably by Harvard or some commercial company.

The CSX departure from Boston means that virtually nobody within Boston city limits will ever see a rail car not intended to carry people. No child will ever see a boxcar, gondola car or flatcar. The exception may



My Kind
of Town/
Joe Galeota

be at the Boston Sand and Gravel facility near North Station or at the CSX yard on Hyde Park's Prescott Street straddling the Dedham boundary, which because of diminished usage is already being eyed for development. To paraphrase Arlo Guthrie in his melodic masterpiece, The City of New Orleans, this city's "got the disappearing railroad blues."

Decades ago the current space that the Prudential Center occupies was a large Boston and

Albany Railroad yard, taken over in its later years by the New York Central Railroad. Also, decades ago, when emerging from the Summer tunnel on the East Boston side, the Boston and Maine Railroad owned a huge yard off Bremen Street. Rail access to the Charlestown and South Boston dock areas is a thing of the past.

Boston has known its railroads by an unusual amalgam of names because of various corporate takeovers during the past half century: New York, New Haven, and Hartford (truncated to be the New Haven), Boston and Maine, Boston and Albany, New York Central, Conrail, and CSX (which draws its first letter from the Chessie System and second letter from the Seaboard System, both of which are consolidations of other railroads).

But our children and grandchildren need not be deprived: they can always get a Lionel set for Christmas and relive the hay day of freight cars arriving in, departing from, and being shunted around the city.