

In recognition to the Army Signal personnel their unusual assignment POTUS.

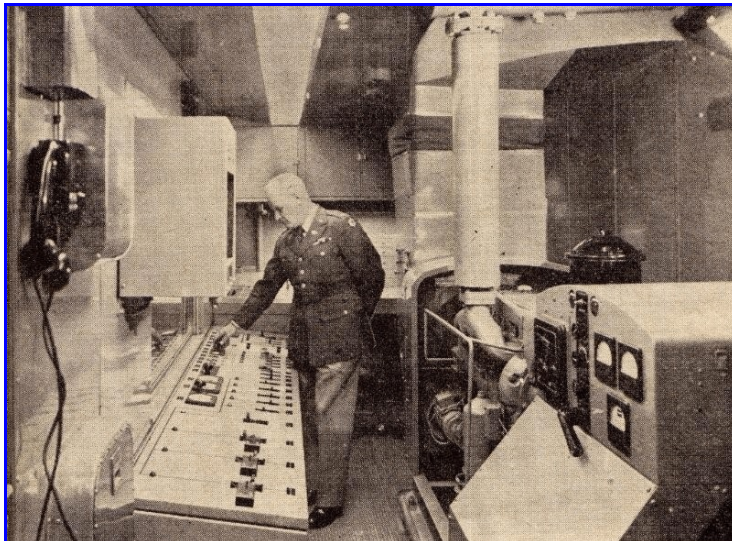
The Presidential Train Ferdinand Magellan - White House communications via, **W3WTE** on wheels! We feature the U.S. Army Signal Corps General Albert J. Myer, Radio Railcar installation.

One fall day in October 1956 12 noon EDT will long be remembered by hundreds of 14 MHz SSB State side amateurs. It was the day W3WTE was, of all places, 60 feet below the Cleveland, Ohio, Railway Terminal Tower Station working the bands. The detail was called "Operation Earthworm" We have a QSL courtesy of W3WTE.

"POTUS" an acronym, stands for President of the United States! The special railroad car system of the White House away from home, luxury living,

rolling home and lecture platform, communications, safety, press corps and energy car. This amazing city on wheels was at times a nightmare for the Secret Service, Railroad and logistics involved in the Presidents safety. There was an advanced two car train and each crossing was inspected by the Secret Service and rail authorities.

Above radio control console occupies part interior of presidential communications General Myers Car. Multiple control panel, a maze of gadgets for radio broadcasts, radio photo transmission, tape recordings of presidential speeches and incoming and outgoing teleprinter copy.



Two diesel AC generators are on the right side of car, can supply enough power to operate the train in any capacity.

Mr Charles Clemens K6QD spoke of his duties much earlier when first assigned to Presidential Communications in 1942. He was chosen to be the first CW operator between the Presidential Train and the White House via HF radio in railroad Car 1401. "The White House on Wheels."

Clemens explained some front seats had been removed and an operating table installed full of radio devices in there place. Telegraph lines alongside the tracks provided a lot of clicks that made it difficult to copy poor signals, mainly in the southwest part of the U.S.A. The clearance requirements for railroad cars prohibited using a real antenna. The radio operators used a wire inside an insulating tube mounted on standoffs about six inches above the metal roof of the car. This was later changed to a copper tube, the same size as the insulating tube, with much better results. Continued

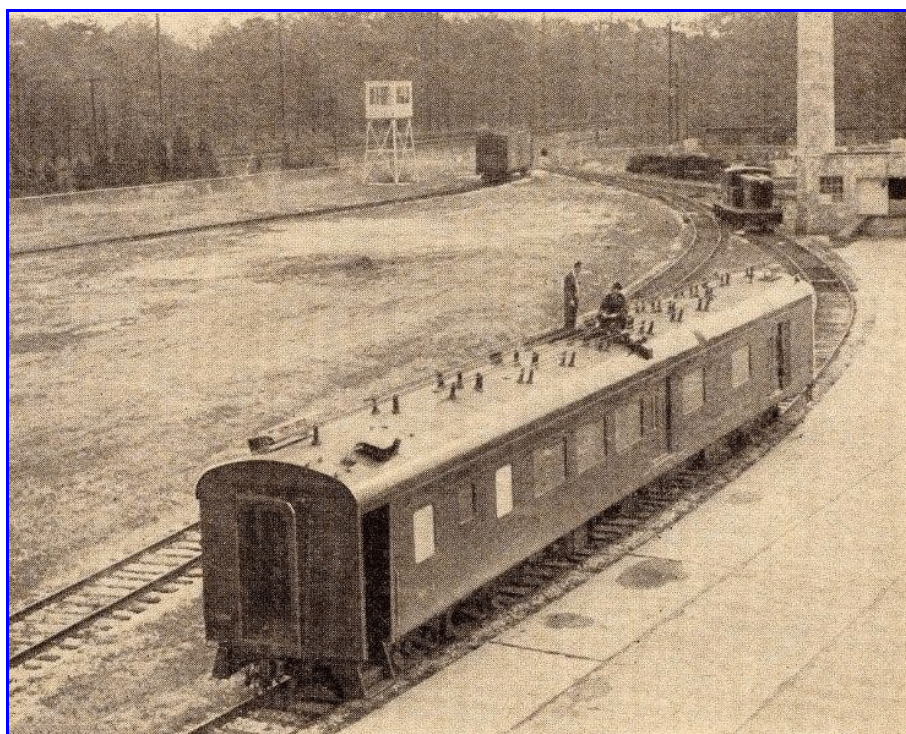
The frequency complement ran from 3 MHz to 17 MHz. (Car 1401 built in 1914 would be replaced in the 50s by the modern General Albert Myer car) Myer was the first Signal Corps Commander.

Clemens K6QD Signal Corps operator said “I was supposed to contact a number of Army stations along our shakedown trip in 1942 riding the rails, none of them more than a couple of hundred miles from our route. As might be expected, results were poor and it was decided to contact WAR in the Pentagon at Washington direct. Successful contacts were made from New Orleans and on the way home. The only real difficulty came when we were close to Washington DC.” Clemens added “Overall, our results were encouraging and we were assigned the task of accompanying President Roosevelt on his swing stumping around the country visiting military bases and aircraft plants.

Equipment and facilities were improved over the years and when Clemens left in 1948, the car had a small operating room, a code center, a small bunk room with four bunks, a lounge room and the baggage half of the car packed with equipment.

Clemens continued “To make a long story quite short, I worked six years on the Presidential Train, traveling with Presidents Roosevelt and Truman in the United States, Canada and Mexico. We logged well over a hundred thousand miles.” Today, the train is no more, Old 1401 is gone, only known by gild of 1401 above the entry door, Gen. Myer car has been retired and the Ferdinand Magellan is restored and on display in Florida.

The General Myers car shown at the U.S. Naval Gun factory in Wash.DC. The mule switcher is in the rear. The small detachment that Clemens knew had evolved into the White House Army Security Agency and finally White House Communications Agency. They wouldn't believe how much equipment they could eliminate by satellite communications today.



Partially scripted from March 1975 Ham Radio Mag article “Brass

Pounding on Wheels” By K6QD CC Jr. & Railroad Magazine February 1953. Thanks to Glenn Laser W3WTE for a copy of the POTUS QSL. Glenn advised the card was found at a yard sale or Hamfest in WV and presented to him. - It would be a pleasure to sit and talk with Mr. Clemens today, but I believe he is a silent key because the call has been reissued several times. I can't come up with anything on the two communications coaches whether they avoided the cutters torch.