



5 minutes with ... John E. Bush, NP Dodge Insurance

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By Josh Chetwynd

John E. Bush, an agent with NP Dodge Insurance in Omaha, NE, has enjoyed a 38-year journey in the insurance business, but if he had his choice he'd rather be taking a ride on a train. You see, Bush may pay the bills writing policies, but his greatest joy is working on the railroad. He spends his weekends serving as a train engineer and has also written or co-written a number of books on the topic, including *Building Union Pacific 844* about the construction of one of America's most iconic locomotives. Bush talked to Ibamag.com about marrying his two passions.

Ibamag.com: What areas of insurance do work in?

JB: It may be easiest to answer this question by stating what I don't do. I am not licensed in the "Life/Health" areas. My business is split pretty evenly between personal and commercial lines. I am fortunate to have a quality relationship with a number of law firms, which I insure as well as serve as their "bond guy."

Ibamag.com: Where does your love of trains fit into your life?

JB: I'm a train lover, yes, but my deepest enjoyment is found in the steam locomotive. I'm fortunate to be a published author on the subject. I also work as a weekend engineer of the two steam-powered trains at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo railroad, which was constructed by Union Pacific in 1968. We have 2.5 miles of undulating railroad with two locomotives. One was built new for the zoo in 1968 and the other was built in Austria in 1890. Each weighs approximately

27 tons, the track is 30 inch gauge and we haul well in excess of 100,000 passengers annually. In fact, my “risk manager” mindset comes into play there frequently, the grades on this railroad are quite steep, so if we don’t manage our braking very carefully or correctly maintain the water level in the locomotive boilers serious problems could occur.

lbamag.com: How did you develop this interest?

JB: My parents told me we were watching a parade, standing near railroad tracks, when the engineer of a steam locomotive behind us blew the whistle and scared the daylights out of me. I was about six months old. My dad said from that moment I was nuts about trains.

lbamag.com: Does your expertise in trains inform your work in the insurance business in any way?

JB: Yes, I am better able to discuss boiler exposures as well as help personal lines insureds with their model railroad exposures.

lbamag.com: How often does it come up with clients?

JB: I am soon to write coverage for the local union’s parade train. It’s been fun talking with the representative I’m working with, including telling and hearing stories about retired railroaders we both know. In addition, I’m fortunate to know many of my insureds well, so a lot of them are aware that I’m a train freak, and I’m frequently asked what I’m up to with my interest. I have also helped several insureds sell their railroad-related collections.

lbamag.com: If you could work on your train interests full-time would you do it or would you miss insurance?

JB: If I could land the right opportunity, yes, I’d go to work for a railroad, probably a tourist railroad [like] the Cumbres & Toltec, which runs along the borders of New Mexico and Colorado being an example. That said, I’ve been in this business for a very long time, and I still enjoy it. Yes, I’d miss it, the largest part of that being my daily interactions with clients and company staff as well as my many agent friends.