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A Side Glance At A Practicing Engineer

An engineer is a guy who looks as if he had played guard for the Chicago Bears. With his build, you picture him as earning his living on the working end of a sixteen pound sledge. However, the only exercise he ever gets is working a slide rule and placing odd lines on a sheet of paper.

He sits before a drawing board designing a locomotive. Through clouds of smoke he gazes at the stenographer. This girl has all the accessories and curves necessary to the smooth functioning of an engineer's office. He looks at her and occasionally places a line on the paper in front of him.

Later he goes into the locomotive shop. One of the guys takes him around to the front of a locomotive and asks him, "Why in hell do you have to make these locomotives more complicated all the time?" The engineer looks at the front end. While designing he had been looking at the stenographer and had idly placed some of the curves he saw on the front of the locomotive. "Whoa, man!" He is filled with consternation but thinks fast. "Well, you see — — when the wind hits those curves it comes around like this and goes up over the top and forms a vacuum. This makes the locomotive more efficient." Gee, imagine that.

Well, the big shots hear about this revolutionary new design and say to each other, "Now there's a good man. He'll bear watching." So, they make him chief engineer so they can watch him. And even up in the main office they hear about it and before you know it he's made a vice president. And after he takes a couple of lessons in public speaking, all he has to do for the rest of his life, is to go around to foremen's association banquets at the various plants and tell them how brilliant the engineers are in the lamp works.

But then a smart alec engineer comes along and asks why those curves are on the locomotive's front end and mentions the fact that it costs a lot of dough to build them there. Nobody can remember why they are there. So he says the locomotive will work more efficiently without them. He redesigns the locomotive, eliminating the curves. The design is revolutionary and the big shots hear about it and, by gosh, he is made chief engineer and they even hear about it up in the main office and he is made vice-president. He goes to all the foremen's association banquets and tells the boys of the brilliance of the men in the lamp works.

—Permission of Steve Burda