

R E V I E W

## Ode to A Railroading Soul: On Railways Faraway

By Scott Bogren

In 2006 I travelled alongside *RAIL Editor* Rich Sampson from the magazine's offices in downtown Washington, D.C., some 100 miles south to Charlottesville, Va., for the opportunity to spend an afternoon with famed rail writer and photographer William D. Middleton. It was time well spent.

As we discussed the future of passenger rail, his musings on Amtrak and his worldwide travel by train, Mr. Middleton took us into his tidy office was bursting at the seams with all manner of rail memorabilia, particularly photographs. Now, some of the photos that filled the file cabinets that lined the walls have been collected and preserved.

Mr. Middleton passed away just over a year ago, and last month an assortment of some of the most memorable photos he took of railroads around the world as he travelled was published by the Indiana University Press in a book entitled, simply: *On Railways Far Away*.

The beautifully-bound book, with nearly 300 pages of exquisitely reproduced black and white photographs, offers more than 50 years worth of rail photos from Asia, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa, Australia,

and more, each with a detailed caption. Mr. Middleton was an engineer, so it should come as no surprise that bridges, trestles and stations take up more than a few pages in the book. And though it would be impossible to pick a favorite, I must ask *RAIL* readers who avail themselves of the book to pay particular attention to how Mr. Middleton's work captures the faces of railroading in rich, stark detail. From the stern, focused expression of a Japanese engineer operating one of his nation's last steam locomotives to the universal look of wonder of children, with school books in tow, as a train leaves Da Nang, Vietnam in 1966, Mr. Middleton's work is unparalleled.

In our *RAIL Magazine* interview with Mr. Middleton in 2006, he discussed how, early in his life, he resolved to, "always travel by train." He did, and this hard-bound collection of photographs is as apt memorial to a man who was known to say, "yet there isn't a train I wouldn't catch." *On Railways Far Away* comes with *RAIL Magazine's* highest recommendation.

