



Photo by John F. Kavanagh

Mike Nielson checks out some of the containers used in a hay movement from Shelby to the Far East.

Idea becomes reality

Alberta firm ships hay through Port of Shelby

An idea that was developed for four years came into being this month when Butte Forage of Pitcher Butte, Alberta shipped six 40-foot containers of compressed hay bales on the Burlington-Northern through the Port of Shelby.

Butte Forage comes to Shelby to pick up the empty containers, takes them to Pitcher Butte where they are filled, and brings them back to the Port of Shelby where they are loaded on flat cars for Seattle. They are then shipped to the Far East, this particular load to Japan. Butte Forage Processors has contracted to move 16 containers a month on the Westwood Shipping Lines.

NETA Executive Director Mike Nielson said that NETA's founder Larry Bonderud knew of the need for this type of shipment four years ago. Recent meetings both here and in Fort Worth, including an international marketing meeting at the NETA of-

fice with Burlington-Northern people from Seattle who spoke to a group of southern Alberta forage shippers, have led to this point.

The railroad is now moving into Shelby from Chicago empty 40-foot containers specifically for this Westwood move. On May 1, eight 40-foot containers arrived in Shelby. On May 11, a vessel sailed to Japan with six of them aboard.

"Specific to this move, Burlington-Northern has been rate responsive in establishing a tariff rate of moving empty steamship line equipment into Shelby," Nielson said. "What we have is a cost effective established rate of moving empties into Shelby from depots in the Midwest and a loaded westbound rate from Shelby to the West Coast. It is the same rate whether you are going to Portland, Tacoma or Seattle.

"Now that we have the precedent set, other steamship lines will be re-

sponsive to making equipment available to us. If it works for Butte Forage, why can't it work for other shippers in the region, not only Canadian shippers but Montana shippers as well.

"What we have now is a competitive rate established that finally allows us to be responsive to shippers moving their products. It's a very key piece of legitimizing the intermodal services Shelby has to offer the domestic and international marketplace.

"The Canadian shippers know the Crows Nest subsidy (which the Free Trade Agreement nullified) is eventually going to come off so they want other options and they want access to American ports.

"This is a perfect example of how it should work when we all work together to identify shippers and respond to their service needs," Nielson added.