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Contact: Karina Romero
Amtrak
202 906.3860

Hank Ernest
IMAGES USA
404 892.2931

AMTRAK OPENS SEARCH TO FIND AND HONOR RETIRED PULLMAN PORTERS
Looking for retired Pullman Porters living in the Northeast

WASHINGTON & ATLANTA - Amtrak, as part of its ongoing celebration of the contributions of Pullman Porters to the development of the nation’s passenger railroad, is issuing a call for contact information for retired Pullman Porters currently living in Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington, DC.

Retired Pullman Porters, their friends and family, may contact Amtrak by calling Saunya Connelly at (202) 906-4164 or emailing her at connels@amtrak.com. Respondents should be prepared to provide the following information: Porter’s full name, telephone number, mailing address, age, years of railroad service, and routes (if known). Deadline for response is April 14, 2009.

A ceremony honoring the legendary Pullman Porters is scheduled to take place during the celebration of National Train Day on May 9, 2009, at Amtrak’s 30th Street Station in Philadelphia. To date, Amtrak has hosted events to show appreciation for the Pullman Porters in Washington, DC, Chicago and Oakland.

“They are a part of America's history,” said Darlene Abubakar, Amtrak’s director of National Advertising. “As every year passes, there are fewer and fewer former porters to tell the story of the unique role they played during the development of the nation’s passenger rail service. Amtrak wants to find these extraordinary gentlemen and honor them. We plan to invite
them to travel by train to Philadelphia so that they may be recognized during National Train Day.”

Pullman Porters were often considered goodwill ambassadors for America’s railroads. They worked tirelessly under extreme conditions, but always treated customers with respect. In their heyday in the early part of the 20th century, they were the largest group of employed African-American men in America – numbering more than 20,000. Pullman Porters provided service to and tended to the needs of travelers from coast-to-coast. Their work schedule was grueling, averaging over 100 hours per week. On meager salaries and tips, they raised families and sent children to college.

The Pullman Company, founded by George Pullman, manufactured railroad cars from the mid-1800s into the 20th Century and developed sleeping cars that bore the company’s name -- Pullman cars. The Pullman Company hired African-Americans to work as porters on board their first class cars, and these porters became renowned for their outstanding service. Pullman Porters, as they came to be known, were organized into the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters under the leadership of A. Philip Randolph in 1925. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was the first labor union led by African-Americans to receive a charter in the American Federation of Labor.

About Amtrak

Amtrak has posted six consecutive years of growth in ridership and revenue, carrying more than 28.7 million passengers in the last fiscal year. Amtrak provides intercity passenger rail service to more than 500 destinations in 46 states on a 21,000-mile route system. For schedules, fares and information, passengers may call 800-USA-RAIL or visit Amtrak.com.

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