

New Zealand Gov. Railway, Greymouth, South Island

The ride of a lifetime...

## A Steam Odyssey

By Earl Brechlin  
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It's a journey that has taken more than 50 years and covered more than two million miles. And, it's a trip back through time as well, to an era when billows of cinder-filled smoke, shrieking plumes of steam, and grease and oil-soaked steel were, literally, the driving engines of industrial civilization.

For Victor Hand of Bar Harbor, the allure of steam locomotives is the crowning glory of his long love affair with railroads. It began in his teens, eventually formed the foundation of a lucrative career in the railroad industry, and continues today in his hobbies.



British Railways, York, England

fashioned way – with a 4x6-inch Graflex Speed Graphic camera and just a few sheets of film. Focus, shutter speed, f-stop, all are set by hand with the aid of a hand-held light meter. At night, a series of large flashbulbs, sometimes triggered by an electronic circuit Mr. Hand built himself, provided the lighting.

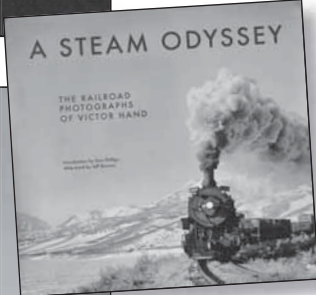
The result is nothing short of high art – that rare blend of subject, lighting, composition, exposure, development, printing and sense of tonality seldom seen in our digital world. The resulting images transcend the reality of the subjects.

It's a fine-art follow up to his most popular railroad book, "The Love of Trains," which has sold tens of thousands of copies and has been translated into four languages.

"The whole process has dominated my life," Mr. Hand said during a recent interview at his home in Halls Cove where he lives with his wife Patricia, Administrative Director of the MDI Biological Laboratory.

Career wise, Mr. Hand worked a variety of jobs in the railroad industry, from entry-level fireman to eventually becoming a management consultant for the creation of Conrail.

His photography first drew see **STEAM** page 4



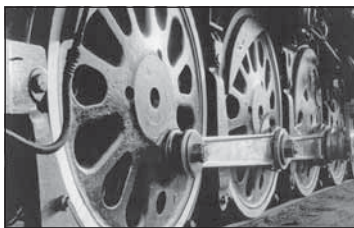
inforced his surgeon father's belief his son would make a good doctor. But young Victor had other plans, taking his first railroad photo in Europe in 1955 while vacationing with his parents. Even when he abandoned a pre-med track in favor of law school, photographing trains was already becoming an all-consuming pursuit. It is a passion that has driven him to travel the globe in search of a vanishing and elusive quarry – the last working steam locomotives.

The incredible, dynamic black and white images he created during his travels have now been released in "A Steam Odyssey," a stunning new book by W.W. Norton of New York. Homer himself would be proud of Mr. Hand's quest.

First and foremost, Victor Hand is a man of precision. The first glimmers of his predilection for doing things right re-



Western Maryland, Helmstetter's Curve, Maryland



Union Pacific, Cheyenne Wyoming



Belgrano Railway, San Antonio de los Combres, Argentina

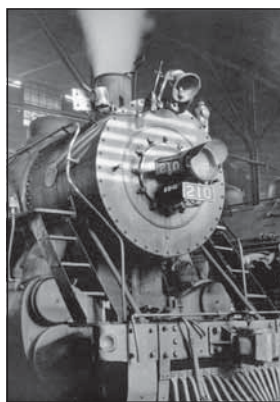


British Railways, Scotland

### Meet the author

**BAR HARBOR** — Victor Hand will share slides and stories from his gorgeous new photo book, "A Steam Odyssey" at the Jesup Memorial Library, 34 Mount Desert St., on Thursday, Dec. 19 beginning at 7 p.m.

And just in time for Christmas, the books will be on sale during a book signing after the talk courtesy of Sherman's Books; part of the proceeds from all sales will be donated to the Jesup. Call 288-4245.



Mexicano Railway, Apizaco, Tlaxcala, Mexico



China Rail, Meng Jia Wan, China



ISLANDER PHOTO COURTESY OF TREVOR HEATH  
Photographer Victor Hand of Bar Harbor in the field near Mount Shasta, California.