

'Dave Hedges No. 50' Is Christened With Cider; Rail Official Praised

by Fred Schneider

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D. E. Hedges, president of the Tennessee, Alabama & Georgia Railway, was honored at ceremonies Friday when the TAG christened its new \$180,000 diesel locomotive "The Dave E. Hedges No. 50."

The "50" was in recognition of Hedges' half century of service with the predecessor of the present company in 1910.

Garrison Siskin, chairman of the TAG board of directors and master of ceremonies at the exercises, said that this was the first time a diesel locomotive has been named in honor of a living person and the president of a railroad.

The shiny new engine had been drawn up on the side track of the TAG offices on East Tenth Street and friends of Hedges gathered at the side of the locomotive to await the president's arrival.

"This really is a surprise," Hedges declared as he stepped through the rear door of the building to face the group gathered in front of him. He had been to lunch with Siskin.

After the dedication address by John A. Chambliss, Chattanooga attorney, TAG executive vice president and veteran member of the board, and tributes by long-time friends, Dave Hedges, grandson of D. E. Hedges, pulled aside the cloth that covered the name of the locomotive on the cab.

Then Mrs. D. E. Hedges, Siskin and Hedges took positions on the front platform of the locomotive and Mrs. Hedges christened the engine by breaking a half-gallon glass jug of cider from the Hedges Farm on Walden's Ridge, on the engine's steel frame.

"Nothing could give me more genuine pleasure than to pay tribute to D. E. Hedges," Chambliss declared. Hedges, he said, is a man of remarkably good judgment, integrity and character."

In his tribute to Hedges, Mayor P. R. Olgiati declared that "all of us know and admire Mr. Hedges." Speaking for the county was Councilman Dave Eldridge, who congratulated Hedges and extended his best wishes.

Others praising Hedges were Dr. Bob McCallie, president of the Civitan Club, of which the TAG president is a member, J. Polk Smartt, a fellow "city farmer"; Lovell J. Morris, old friend of the honoree; C. A. Schier, industrialist, and E. DeL. Wood, executive secretary of the Chattanooga Manufacturers Association.

In his tribute to Hedges, Siskin said in part:

“By dint of energy and ability, by a passion for work and sterling integrity, Dave Hedges not only rose from the ranks to become president, but won the affection and evoked the respect of all whom he had come in contact.

“As a mark of our deep appreciation and as a gesture of our high admiration it affords me much pleasure to announce that we have named our new diesel locomotive ‘The Dave E. Hedges.’ May it enter upon its service with distinguished service for the TAG Railway Co., proudly symbolic of the man in whose honor it is named.”

The engine was brought to the ceremony from the TAG roundhouse in Alton Park by a crew composed of T. G. Fricks, engineer, and B. J. Lackey, conductor. They are two of the oldest employees in TAG train service.

Hedges spoke briefly in accepting the honor bestowed on him.

Born in Jackson, Ohio, Hedges came to Chattanooga in 1902. After graduating from Chattanooga High School in 1909, he worked for brief periods with other companies before joining the TAG in 1910 in its engineering department.

He was appointed auditor in 1912 and on April 2, 1945, was appointed vice president, comptroller and assistant secretary in 1945, until April 17, 1959, when he was elected president.

The invocation at the ceremonies Friday was by Dr. W. S. Thorington of Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church of which Hedges is a member. He is also connected with several civic and business organizations.