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Beat Feller

April 26th 1957 - May 12th 2016

“These men are what we are dreaming of:
Engine drivers in the Swiss mountains.”



Beat Feller on an MOB special.


Photo: Stephen Hauswirth

Beat Feller started his speech at the funeral of an enthusiastic railway fan two years ago with these words of an SRS-member. One of the MOB's most senior drivers giving a very touching speech in a church about a railway-enthusiast. He quoted this sentence in English. What a surprise! This was typical of Beat. He seems to have known everything that a professional needs to know about his work. He was fascinated and inspired by what he did and experienced. His inspiration was catching for other people. Beat was always ready to share his knowledge. Step by step, he demonstrated how something worked and explained his procedure. No one had to feel inferior. So Beat was a very supportive coach. Even philosophical views had room in this technical universe. A symbiosis between humans and machines is needed to make a train move.

Beat's career started conventionally. After finishing school he went through an apprenticeship as a mechanic in a Federal Workshop at his birthplace Thun. In 1974 he did his training as an engine driver at the Jungfraubahn, working and living in this tight-knit group at the foot of the Eiger for two years. In 1977 Beat joined the MOB (Montreux - Oberland Bernois) in Zweisimmen. In the beginning Beat experienced an MOB that used its infrastructure and rolling stock to the limit, as well as its staff, so it was understandable that he welcomed the introduction of modern rolling stock. When old vehicles were given to volunteer-run associations it was Beat who gave the necessary information on preservation and handling of these veterans to the next generation. Of course the MOB took notice of his talents. He became trainer and

senior driver for the staff in Zweisimmen. His superiors trusted him and worked without narrow guidelines and intensive supervision. It was the best solution for everyone. Beat could do nothing but give his best. His philanthropic manner made contact with all people very easy. In his spare time Beat involved himself at the Blonay-Chamby Museum Railway and with the "Blaues Bäumli", the nostalgic RBS railcar.

Beat was approaching the finish-line of his career when his health got worse. He would have loved to be a part of the initiation of the MOB's new Class 9000 EMUs, but his strength diminished and cancer caught up with him. We would have wished him every joy and to be able to ride to his retirement on a locomotive decorated with flowers, to have more time for his family and his hobbies. On May 20th, many railway employees met at the church in Zweisimmen to bid farewell to Beat. Other colleagues arranged a "concert" with the whistles of the engines at the B-C Chaulin Depot.

Just imagine you are driving your train through a dark winter's night. Once in a while a deserted platform appears in the dim shine of the front lamps. The day's work isn't over yet, and the children at home are already asleep. The last candle has gone out. Then you need an extra portion of motivation, like friends who are with you in their dreams and thoughts. Beat will be there for those who knew him. 

Editor's Note. I asked Daniel Hauswirth, a BLS Driver who knew, and worked with Beat Feller to sum up the life of this sadly departed professional railwayman. I thank him for this eloquent elegy. Beat was a Member and good friend of the *Swiss Railways Society* who was never failing in his courtesy to those who met, worked and shared a cab with him.