

# **Turntable Times**

**Volume XXXI**

**Number 6**

**June 1999**



# Turntable Times

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**Volume XXXI      June 1999      Number 6**  
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Mixed Freight ..... Robin Shavers  
Small Rails ..... Dave Meashey  
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## Cards and Flowers

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If you know of a Chapter Member who is sick, lost a loved one or has a new birth in the family, please contact Elizabeth Leedy. Elizabeth is responsible for Chapter cards and flowers and can be reached at 389-5274.

## Cover Photo

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Our T6 No 41 is approaching the enginehouse at Belington, West Virginia on May 3, 1999 after almost 6 months of storage. Richard D. Shell Photo.

## Meeting Notice

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The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will hold its next general meeting on Thursday, June 17, 1999 at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of McClanahan and Crystal Spring Avenue in Roanoke.

## Deadline for Turntable Times

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The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Friday, June 18, 1999. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, VA 24078-2128.

## Mixed Freight - June

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by Mr. Robin Shavers

Last month I reported that Norfolk Southern had plans to lay off 110 employees in Roanoke due to a slump in coal traffic. I recently received a very detailed news story from The Washington Post about the slump in demand for U.S. coal. The story also gave an account on how it is effecting the bottom lines and furloughed employees of Norfolk Southern and CSX Transportation. According to the National Mining Association, U.S. export coal peaked at 79 million tons in 1996, declined to 69 million tons in 1997, 60 million tons for 1998 and a projected 58 million tons for this year. A number of factors are responsible for the decline and experts do not know when the trend will reverse. The factors listed include the down slide of the Asian economy which in turn effected Australia which had boosted coal production to meet a bustling Asian economy at the time. With Asia out of the market for so much coal, Australia turned to Europe offering coal at a lower price than Uncle Sam could afford. Other factors include an unusually strong dollar, the termination of apartheid in South Africa, economic chaos within ocean shipping, steel dumping by Eastern Europe and a surprising revival of family coke by Chinese. This past warm winter did not help matters either.

FORTUNE magazine recently published it's list of it's most admired companies. America's railroads placed as follows: Norfolk Southern 25th, BNSF at 119th, CSX at 172nd, and Union Pacific at 365th.

Conrail locomotives working with CSX locomotives on freights through Richmond both north and southbound has been going on for years. Conrail diesels are now operating on the point and in all Conrail lashups over the former RF&P and on southward over the former SCL.

The models I've noticed the most is the SD60M and the SD601. All the Conrail units I've seen so far have been on mixed freights.

From the serious business to the downright dangerous. A 62 year old man was rescued from potential injury and near possible death after being trapped beneath a freight train in Gresham, Oregon. According to a police report as told by the victim, he was standing between two mainline tracks and was struck by a slow moving westbounder and dragged 15 feet before freeing himself. He then immediately fell against a slow moving eastbounder which dragged him 18 feet dropping him roughly 3 feet from where his journey began.

## **Small Rails - June**

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by Dave Meashey

The Roanoke Valley Model Engineers continue to upgrade the track and scenery on their layout modules. Backdrops will no longer be used. Instead, a series of low hills will define the backs of the modules. This will make it easier for members to rerail any mishaps. It will also make it easier for operators to see where the trains are from a central control station.

The club has also standardized on a 9 inch section of track for splice tracks between modules. These sections will be mounted on beveled plywood the same height as the roadbed. This should make assembling the layout just a little more easy.

The Big Lick Big Train Operators held their April meeting at Bill Sours home on April 25th. Bill had scratch built several structures this past winter. Two new houses, an elevated crossing guard's shanty, and a new saloon, complete with interior, now grace his layout. A new Railway Express Agency building was also completed over the winter. May will not have a meeting, but the club

will meet again in June.

## **Sad and Sorry End**

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by Dave Meashey

This title is not about a tragedy, but instead reflects the shabby state of the few remaining working cabooses. The caboose purge failed to eliminate every working example of this beloved (for everyone but operating departments) car. Those few still serve on trains that switch industries or service mines at the ends of extra long sidings.

I have seen one example of a beautifully refurbished caboose at the East End Car Shops employee and family open house day. Unfortunately, the cabooses I see in service around Roanoke and Salem are nowhere near as nice. Some of them look as though they are one wheel revolution away from the scrap yard. I fail to understand why a profitable railroad would allow a functioning caboose to get so forlorn looking.

The car is still needed, so why not fix it up to reflect the prosperous business that owns it? At the very least a freshly painted caboose is good advertising. Beyond that, a refurbished caboose should be good for employee morale. It would indicate to employees that their company wants them to have well-maintained equipment so they can perform their jobs better and with greater safety.

Perhaps I am reading the wrong message from these sad and shabby cabooses. I hope somebody can give me good news for their futures. Seems to me that just because a caboose is called a crummy, doesn't mean that it has to look crummy!

## **Glory Bound! Chapel Car Conference**

A church on wheels? Yes! This October the American Baptist Historical Society is sponsoring a seminar to study the chapel cars, "churches on rails," which beginning in 1890 carried missionaries, bibles, and tracts to thirty states. This use of cutting edge technology by churches represents an interesting chapter in both church history and the development of railroads in America.

The seminar is scheduled for October 10-17, 1999, at Green Lake Conference Center, Wisconsin, home of the chapel car Grace, one of three remaining chapel cars. Speakers will provide both stories and historical context about the thirteen chapel cars, which between 1890 and 1940 served as temporary Sunday Schools and churches for Baptists, Episcopalians and Roman Catholics in hundreds of railroad towns throughout thirty western states. Railroad historian John H. White, Jr., is an invited speaker. White is the author of *The American Railroad Passenger Car* (1978), *Cincinnati Locomotive Builders* (1982), and several other books on railroad technology. He is also historian emeritus, History of Technology, Smithsonian Museum of American History.

In attendance all week will be featured speakers, Wilma & Norman Taylor, authors of *This Train Is Bound For Glory: The Story of America's Chapel Cars*, forthcoming from Judson Press in August. The seminar will also feature a book-signing party with the authors. The Taylors traveled thousands of miles to document the history of chapel cars. Norman Taylor, who has over forty years of railroad experience, will explain his work in restoring the chapel car Grace. A freelance writer, Wilma Taylor is also the author of *The Valley of the Blue Heron* (1995), which won the National Federation of Press Women Writing

Competition.

Also providing context will be experts on the Episcopal and Roman Catholic sponsorship of chapel cars and historians, who will discuss this part of railroad history as part of a broader campaign to evangelize the American West.

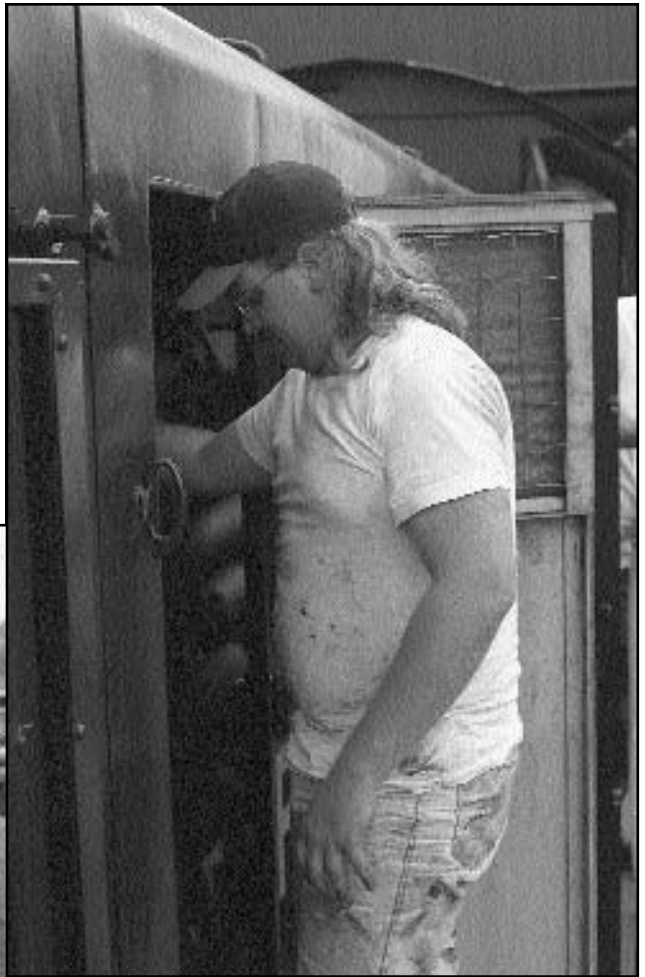
The first chapel car was sponsored by the Episcopal Church and Father Herman Page of Topeka, Kansas will be present to provide context and stories of these cars which traveled in the Dakotas and northern Michigan. In addition to his pastoral ministries, Father Page is active in the Topeka Chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society and his father and grandfather were bishops of the Diocese of Northern Michigan, one area of ministry for the Episcopal chapel cars.

Brother Michael Grace, S.J., Archivist at Loyola University (Chicago), and The Reverend Monsignor Kenneth Velo have both been invited to provide stories and context about the Catholic Church Extension Society, the sponsor of the chapel cars St. Anthony, St. Peter, and St. Paul. Also included will be a special talk, "From Archives to Book," by Beverly Carlson, former Executive Director of the American Baptist Historical Society. She will describe the process of finding chapel car materials in the Archives Center and introducing Norman and Wilma Taylor to these materials. Conference director, Dr. Everett Goodwin, and the AB Historical Society director, Deborah Van Brockhoven, will provide additional historical context, including a conference song book of hymns and songs from the period 1890 to 1940.

Other conference features include morning devotions, old fashioned "hymn sings" in and around the chapel car Grace, videos, an historic train ride and field trip to the National Railroad Museum in Green Bay. This museum is "one of

America's oldest and largest railroad museums," with more than 70 locomotives and railroad cars on exhibition.

The comprehensive fee of \$465 includes a double occupancy room in modern Kern Lodge, meals, and program fee. For additional information contact: The American Baptist Historical Society, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851 (610-768-2269 or x2378). To register contact: "Glory Bound: a Conference on Railroad Chapel Cars," American Baptist Assembly, Green Lake Wisconsin, 54941-9599 (1-800-558-8898). (American Baptist Historical Society Press Release).



Both: Richard D. Shell  
Preparing our locomotive for the first run in over six months, Jerry Johnson(left) is getting the pre-lub pump prepared while Brian Crosier is getting dirty in the prelub process.

Back Cover: Posed outside the engine house, 41 looks almost like it did on delivery almost 40 years ago.



**Turntable Times** is published monthly as the newsletter of the Roanoke Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Inc. Opinions and points of view expressed herein are those of the staff members of the **Turntable Times** and not necessarily reflect those of the members, officers or directors of the Chapter. Items of interest should be sent to Editor Kenny Kirkman, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, VA 24078-2128.

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