



Turntable TIMES

The Official Newsletter of the
Roanoke Chapter, National
Railway Historical Society, Inc.

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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.

Meeting Notice

The Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will hold its next regular meeting on Thursday, April 18, 2002 at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be held at the First Presbyterian Church on the corner of McClanahan and Crystal Spring Avenue in Roanoke.

Our April program is Virginian Vignettes provided by Bill Mason. We still need volunteers for programs and refreshments!

From The Head End

Cards and Flowers

If you know of a Chapter Member who is sick, lost a loved one or has a new birth in the family, please contact Bonnie Molinary. Bonnie is responsible for Chapter cards and flowers and can be reached at 362-0273.

Deadline for Turntable Times

The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Tuesday, April 18, 2002. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

Material For Turntable Times

We are always in need of articles, photos or news items for the Turntable Times. Due to copyright restrictions, we cannot reprint articles from many newspapers; a condensed or rewritten article crediting the source is acceptable. At the moment, we have several articles on hand, one by our own Ray Myers which will appear in the next issue on "Train Watching-1949" However, we still need material on an ongoing basis. Please contribute.

Cover Photo

On Saturday October 6, 2001 former Pennsylvania E8As No. 5711 and 5809 now reurbished from their Conrail livery bring a ten car excursion train under an ancient truss bridge at Gallitzin, Pennsylvania returning to Altoona for yet another trainload of riders. Robin R. Shavers photo.

Chapter Plans Spring Outing.

by Richard D. Shell

Mark your calendars for the weekend of April 27th and 28th as we plan to board an Abbott bus and head for wild and wonderful West Virginia for a two-day weekend of train riding.

Details were provided in the last issue. For more information, please call Richard D. Shell at 540-992-3611.

Small Rails-April

by Dave Meashey

I visited the Roanoke Valley Model Engineers at their Crossroads Mall location in March. The club's new portable layout is still coming along nicely. All the sub-roadbed seems to be finished, and some trestles were being test fitted to their locations.

Club members were having a clinic on operating with Digital Command Control (DCC). The layout will run with DCC, and all locomotives will require DCC control chips. DCC allows individual locomotives to be controlled independently from track voltage and current flow. Unlike normal DC voltage control, it is possible to have a head-on collision with DCC. Operators need to stay sharp to prevent such mishaps, but fortunately, most DCC control systems have an emergency shutdown control as well.

The Big Lick Big Train Operators will hold it's first 2002 meeting in late April 2002 at my house. The railroad is presently buried under pine needles, so I have some work to do to get the railroad ready. Most buildings were stored in the house for the winter, but the station platform will need to be

cleaned before the station can be set out. Actually, having a meeting to prepare the railroad for is helpful. It gets me off dead center and into the operation mode.

Muggles of Steam

by Dave Meashey

In the very popular series of Harry Potter books, the wizards and witches refer to people who can't do magic, or even believe in it, as Muggles. Regrettably, when it comes to knowledge concerning the steam locomotive, most people today would be classed as Muggles as well. I'm not just referring to the public at large, but even among railroad enthusiasts and model railroaders the steam locomotive has become a thing of mystery.

Model steam locomotives are still very popular, despite the fact that many of their owners cannot remember the days when the real thing was the prime means of railroad motive power. All those wheels, those churning drive rods, the interesting lumps and contours, and added pieces of machinery still have a great appeal to folks who have never experienced the real thing. But, the purpose of all those interesting bits and pieces is as much a mystery to most people as the conjuring of a spell to cure an aching tooth. Muggles!

At my favorite website, I frequently read questions like the following: "The box says my engine is a 4-4-0, what does 4-4-0 stand for?" "What were those funny lumps on top of the boiler for?" "What was the purpose of those little wheels in front of the drive wheels and behind them?" "How did they get the water into the boiler?" "How did they get the coal into the tender?" "Why

did different locomotives have different sizes of drive wheels?"

Well, the encouraging thing is that at least these people are asking questions. They care. They want to know how things worked, and the "why" behind different designs. And they will get answers from those of us who know. From those of us who by luck, or by sheer determination, actually got to run steam locomotives, after they ceased being the main motive power for the major railroads. From those of us who were fortunate to be trained by men who worked with steam power when it was still the major form of motive power.

That is why the mission of the NRHS is so important. So many folks are Muggles when it comes to the magic of steam. Why is preserving this knowledge so important? Consider this.

In 1806 Meriwether Lewis and William Clark completed their expedition. The new Louisiana Territory and the Pacific Northwest were so vast that the popular thought of that time was that it would take 1,000 years to settle all this country! Nobody had thought about a thing called a railroad. Nobody had seen a steam locomotive. In 1827 the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was chartered. In 1829 the B&O ran its first train—horse drawn. By 1830 the first efficient American-built steam locomotive was tried on the B&O. By the mid-1830s, infant steam locomotives were chugging on emerging railroads all up and down the Eastern seaboard.

After that, the growth was rivaled only by the personal computer explosion in the 1980s. Railroad route miles burgeoned over the map of the United States. Steam

locomotives became more powerful and reliable. Together, these two inventions allowed the vastness of the United States to be settled in less than 100 years! By 1900, the frontier was considered closed. The Iron Horse thundering over the steel road allowed that accomplishment. For that reason alone, the knowledge and lore of the steam locomotive deserve preservation, as do working examples of the locomotives, themselves. But, steam locomotives are more than just history to me; they're magic!

Mixed Freight - April

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

You should have heard by now that CSX Transportation will be applying yet another paint scheme to its locomotive fleet as they are rebuilt or new from the factory. The new scheme which has strong Chesapeake & Ohio resemblance represents a new CSX ready to meet the challenges facing today's and tomorrow's rail freight transportation needs. The new scheme is more cost-effective, more durable and fade resistant. The first locomotive to sport the new look is SD50 # 8503.

Last year I reported on changes Norfolk Southern is making at it's Enola Yard facility to improve service. The \$9.8 million project has been completed. Enola can now process 600 freight cars daily compared to 125 previously. 13 miles of track were renewed, and 10 miles of crossties were replaced. Unused office buildings were renovated, and 12 new light towers were installed. Enola Yard was built by The Pennsy back in 1905 and for a time was the largest of it's kind in the United States.

A few months ago I presented an in depth write up in this column on Mr. John W. Whitaker for whom Norfolk Southern named it's newest intermodal terminal located in Austell, Georgia. I commented that it was good that Mr. Whitaker was alive to enjoy and behold such an honor. I regret to report that John W. Whitaker passed away on February 27th, 2002. As one of many firsts, he was the first African-American locomotive engineer for Norfolk Southern predecessor railroad Central of Georgia.

The North Carolina Transportation Museum, located in Spencer, will hold it's annual RAIL DAYS event on April 27 & 28th of this year. The hours for both days are 9:00 a.m. til 5:00 p.m. Admission is \$7.00 per person. Keep in mind that 2002 marks the 25th year of the museum's existence. For more info call 704-636-2889 or log onto nctrans.org

One of my favorite lines from the television program HEE HAW was Grandpa Jones' "Truth is stranger than fiction." The following definitely belongs within that category. On February 11th, three 12 year old lads stole and consumed a 16 oz. bottle of liquor. On their way home, they come in contact with former Atlantic Coast Line now CSX railroad tracks. A train is in view and approaching fast. Two of the boys successfully dash across the double high iron. The third stumbles and falls between the rails of Track One the southbound main. Being influenced by the strong alcohol and the total fear of having something as big as trains bearing down upon him at speed, he freezes with fear. Meanwhile in the locomotive cab of Amtrak train # 53, the south-

bound Auto Train, the engineer sees what first appears to be a blanket. It is not until he is almost on top of the object that he realizes it is a person. One hand throws on the brakes and the other makes radio contact with the dispatcher in Jacksonville; Florida Two hundred ton Genesis locomotives plus 35 cars pass over the kid's body. The boy is not touched.

During an interview with the boy and his mother, he said he passed out just before the train roared over him. A CSX official noted there was maybe 1 or 2 inches of clearance between the boy's body and the underbelly of the train. A slight movement by the boy and he would have met the same gruesome fate as four individuals did some time ago in Northern Virginia. Everyone agreed that an angel was definitely with the kid during that brief time slot. He and his friends were not charged for stealing the liquor or consuming it. They were not charged with trespassing on CSX property where they crossed the tracks. His mom did deny him TV viewing privileges for two weeks.

License Plates are Moving

By Bill Arnold

In early February; I contacted the Neighbors section editor of the Roanoke Times regarding the possibility of getting them to include an article on our efforts to secure 350 applications from residents of Virginia to use a Virginia Railway Heritage/611 commemorative license plate. She said that she felt that this story was "more than a Neighbors article" and that she would refer the request to the news editor. Within a few days, I was contacted



Photo Courtesy of Seth Gintner/Roanoke Times

by the news editor and informed that they felt the request had merit and I would be contacted by a news writer for more information. Over the next few weeks, Ken Miller and I were contacted numerous times by Mike Agnello. In late February, arrangements were made by photographer Seth Gintner to photograph the license plate alongside the 611 at the Virginia Museum of Transportation. Finally, the article appeared in the March 1, 2002 issue of the Roanoke Times.

Since that time, I received over 200 requests for an application blank and as April 1, and of that number, 75 new applications have been returned with the appro-

prate fee. That along with the previous 100 applications on file puts us about halfway there. New applications continue to come in daily (5 more as I write this article) as well as requests for application blanks (2 more). Contacts will be made in the near future to other Virginia newspapers and periodicals. At present, we are on the NRHS, VTM, and Virginia DMV web sites.

Following are some comments included with the application requests..."I worked as a shop inspector in the East End shops from 1937 to 1945 and saw quite a few of the J's as they were built—I couldn't pass up the opportunity to get a plate"... "I

would like a plate for my car and my truck. The 611 has special meaning to my family because my father-in-law was an engineer on this engine and I remember him being so proud of it. In fact, he was engineer on the last steam engine to Bristol"... "Although I currently have a specialty plate, I would be willing to replace it to support your efforts and to increase awareness and appreciation of this outstanding piece of railroad history"... "My dad was a machinist for the N&W and helped build the Class Js. He worked in the East End Shops for 52 years"... "If there is ever a campaign to solicit funds to make the 611 locomotive operational again, I would definitely contribute to the cause. I commend your society's efforts to memorialize the great 611 locomotive".

If you intend to order one of these plates, please do so in the very near future. The sooner we get to 350, the sooner we'll display the 611 to the USA. You can send your request directly to me at 62 Upland Drive, Salem, VA 24153. A No. 10 SASE would be appreciated.

Passenger Train Update

by Gary Ballard

More passenger trains are coming to Virginia, and so are the people to ride them. Virginia Railway Express is turning many heads around the south side of Washington, D.C. A ridership explosion has hit VRE, due to an explosion of worsening highway traffic in the area. Washington's news station, WTOP radio 1500- AM, broadcasts traffic reports on the "eights" of the hour, and listening to these reports is proof positive. It is the norm to drive 38 miles

just to get to work, and have that commute take up to 90 minutes to complete.

Perhaps that's why thousands are switching to the train, to the tune of 400,000 more riding on VRE trains in 2001. During peak commuting hours about one third of VRE's 30 daily trains have riders standing. VRE has only a 72 car fleet to perform the incredible passenger loadings it handles Monday through Friday. To handle the expected ridership to occur in the next two years, VRE needs 22 additional bi-level cars.

Last November, two trainsets with matching locomotives arrived on the VRE property from Seattle, Washington. Seattle's commuter system is called "Sounder." These trains feature new bi-level cars and are pulled by tall EMD F59 PH locomotives, all painted in a white, green and blue color scheme. The three colors are in a "wave" configuration going horizontal across the entire train. VRE logos have been applied to the equipment. While the coaches resemble those found on Toronto's "GO" transit system, the new locomotives are something else. The streamlined F59 is as tall as the big double decked coaches they pull.

The tall diesels have a sloped back front profile. EMD has put the engineer as high up and off the ground as possible, thus being safer in any would-be grade crossing incident. The VRE diamond logo, which favors the old REA logo of many years ago, is proudly affixed to the nose of the engine. There is a skyline casing that runs along the top, hiding from view any radiator fans, pipes and exhaust ports... what other locomotive had this cosmetic feature in the 1950's? The Sounder trains operate

out of Union Station in Washington, supplementing VRE's need for more seat capacity. Seattle has some expansion plans for its commuter trains soon, but for now the two trainsets are on loan to VRE, and in Union Station the question is often asked, "When's that pretty train arriving?"

Changing gears a bit, many are asking about the Amfleet equipment, and where will it end up as the new Acela trains replace the older Amtrak trains. Well, due to increased ridership the old Amfleet equipped Metroliners are not going away yet. The original plan was to have the Metroliners replaced, one at a time, as a new Acela high speed trainset was released into service. A few of the Metroliner routes have been kept although all the Acela trains are now operating in revenue service.

This is not making sad faces from some of the passengers. Some of the business clientele of Amtrak's has been riding the Metroliners a very long time. The fast limited-stop train was first introduced in 1968. Did the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Penn Central RR. ever know just how successful the Budd built train would be? Not that the faster Acela doesn't cut the mustard with the veteran riders, they've said they hate to see the Metroliner go away. Those that say that are well acquainted with the service provided in the old "Club Car." Some went in that first-class car and sat in the same seat for perhaps 10, 15, or 20 years. They got to know the attendant, and the attendant got to know them. Maybe after a hard day on Wall Street, the ride home on the old Metroliner was a safe haven, you knew

nothing could go wrong here...a beverage was provided first followed by an evening meal that soothed your nerves. That is what the riders who rode "The Met" as they called it with affection are saying.

As the Amfleet equipment comes off line, some of the cafe' cars will replace older Heritage lounge cars on Amtrak's Adirondack. The exact future for the Amfleet Club cars is not clear, although some may be used to make up business-class sections on some of the Acela Regional trains that already utilize Amfleet cars. Metroliner coaches have been dispatched to be used on the new Downeaster service in Maine.

Service on the Acela Express is doing very well. Ridership has surprised everyone and is exceeding earlier expectations. Just north of Trenton, the sleek train has been cleared for 135 mph. Other sections of the mainline will soon be good for the higher speed limits for the Acela high speed train. From my own standpoint being a crew member on this train, it's a very complex process in getting approval for operating at higher speed. For one thing, the track side signals must be placed farther apart. Anyone in railroading understands that requires some time to do. The overhead catenary wires that supply the Acela its power, must be changed somewhat. The overhead wires and the old GG-1 engines were built for one another back in 1934. As the years have passed and the speed limits have gone up from 70mph, to 100, 125, 135 and higher, some adjustments must be made.

Some of the new adjustments can be seen on the new electrified mainline north

of New Haven, CT. That newly installed wire has counter-weights employed, to keep a constant tension on the wires to compensate for various weather conditions such as temperature change. The older Pennsylvania Railroad catenary of the 1930's did not come with that feature. This is the catenary system that runs from New York City to Washington, D.C. A new tighter wire will prevent the locomotive's pantograph from "bouncing" against the wire. A wire with constant tension will not sag, thus helping to prevent it from being snagged in the locomotive's pantograph, and being pulled down.

Be on the look out for Acela Express trains to venture beyond electrified territory. There is a new Turbine powered locomotive being designed. If the design is successful and the tests being conducted go well, this could be the answer to those areas of the country that wants high speed train service. Already, many of us are aware that the corridor from Washington, D.C., Richmond, VA to Charlotte, N.C. is being considered for the service. Lawmakers and voters are desiring the same service between Chicago and St. Louis. So are those in Florida and Texas.

The locomotive being tested looks like the current Acela power car, only it is powered by fuel burning turbine, thus, the need of overhead catenary wires is eliminated. Pratt & Whitney is the supplier of the turbine, which is designed to burn regular diesel fuel. The U.S. D.O.T. has put the locomotive through several tests at the huge U.S. Government test track in Colorado, where any type of equipment or car consist can be examined.

The new test unit pulled three Horizon passenger coaches at speeds up to 135mph. The unit was to return to Vermont, where today's Acela high speed train was built. What the gas mileage is on the 5,000 horsepower "blower" is not known, that information has not been disclosed. But, those cities that want high speed service are waiting to hear the final test result, you can count on that.

Condolences

The Chapter offers its condolences to the family of member Otis Caldwell who passed away recently. Our thoughts are with you.

Recent Railnews of Note

from The Brass Switchkey Newsletter
(Mar 17) Floodwaters hampered rail operations in Eastern Kentucky, Western VA and neighboring Appalachian areas. CSX suspended operations on its Kingsport Subdivn between Erwin, TN and Shelby, KY. and on its Cumberland Valley Subdivn between Corbin, KY. and Big Stone Gap, VA. Norfolk Southern suspended operations near its Carbo Yard and west to Tazewell, Lee, Dickinson and Buchanan Counties in VA. All affected CSX and NS lines were returned to service by midweek. (CSX, NS)

(Feb 20) 16 Amtrak employees were arrested in New York, NY. The employees, who clean and maintain passenger cars at Amtrak's Sunnyside Yard in Queens, were accused of using credit and phone cards taken from the wallets and purses of passengers who had inadvertently left them aboard Amtrak trains. (ffd: New York Daily News)

(Feb 20) Norfolk Southern instituted a "matched consist" policy requiring like locomotives to be run together to maximize overall performance. NS established six categories of locomotives that may be run together: Group Y for yard switching units, Group 1 for 4 axle units used in yard, local or road service, Group 2 for 4 axle units used in merchandise and intermodal service, Group 3 for conventional 6 axle units, Group 4 for high-adhesion 6 axle units and Group 5 for alternating current SD80MAC units. Each group includes specific locomotive models. (ffd: NS Corp.)

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

April 18, 2002
Regular Meeting

April 27-28, 2002
Chapter Outing on West Virginia Central
Contact Richard Shell 992-3611 for details.

May 7, 2002
Board Meeting

May 16, 2002
Regular Meeting

June 4, 2002
Board Meeting

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