



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, March 18, 2004 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 program: Travel west and into the past as Pentrex brings historic hot spots in full digital quality with "Railfanning Southern California in the 1950s" Diesels were replacing the last of the mighty steam locomotives on the Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, and Santa Fe in the 1950s. You'll see 4-8-4s, 2-10-2s, and Cab forwards, plus EMD E and F-units, SD-9s, Alco PAs and FAs, FM Erie-built, Baldwins and more. Freight and passenger trains are shown at Cajon, Tehachapi, Beaumont Pass, LAUPT, Glendale and Burbank Junction, even over Santa Fe's Elsinore Branch. It's one of the most appealing railroad films ever! Approximately 1 hour 10 mins.

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 Thursday, March 18, 2004. 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 most newspapers; a condensed rewritten article crediting the source, however, is acceptable.

Cover Photo

Believe me, when this photo was made about 1980, I never would have thought that I would wanted to go back to those days. As well, I never would have thought seeing a white "NW" on a unit would be something unusual. Ken Miller photo.

Mixed Freight - March

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

CSX Transportation will be testing 3 hybrid yard locomotives for ninety days. The 2000 horsepower locomotives were built by Railpower Technologies Corporation and are called Green Goats. The units are built on GP9 frames and feature a small diesel and long life batteries. CSX has an option to extend it's lease of the three units for an additional 90 days if it wants to.

Those of us whom spend time out along the mainlines may see more coal trains and their empty counterparts this year if predictions are correct. According to officials whom keep track of coal consumption within domestic and foreign markets, coal consumption for 2004, especially early 2004, should be up considerably over 2003. Coal consuming utilities located in the East and South started 2004 with low stockpiles. These will need to be brought up to normal levels. With natural gas at it's current high price, plants that have coal as an alternative are using little or no natural gas. We often hear and read of American jobs going overseas. Those jobs are causing a boom within foreign markets such as China, especially in steel production. We also may see more coal being transported in coal hoppers and gons from western railroads. Mines in the East will not be able to keep up with the predicted demands. Due to environmental and social concerns, building new power plants is difficult when it comes to securing all the required permits. Expanding existing power plants is expensive.

A few years back, I reported on the internal meltdown of the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum located in Altoona, PA. The organization is back on it's feet and has been renamed and reorganized as The Railroaders Heritage Corporation. I spoke

with several employees including a manager and optimism was high. Lets wish them high greens for the future.

By mid or late 2005, a coke plant should go on line at Haverhill, Ohio. Ground was broken for the facility, which will be served by Norfolk Southern, on December 17, 2003. The plant is being constructed by Sun Coke Company for International Steel Group. Norfolk Southern will deliver 800,000 tons of coal which will produce 550,000 tons of coke to be delivered to locations in Sparrows Point, Maryland, Chicago and Cleveland.

Norfolk Southern will be spending \$178 million dollars in 2004 for 100 new six axle locomotives and to upgrade others. 390 multilevel auto racks are to be certified and rebuilt. 212 bilevel autoracks will be purchased at the end of their lease.

It may be very cold and or snowy now but Spring is not far away and with Spring comes a few excursions. On Saturday April 24th, The Hagerstown Roundhouse Museum will offer a doubleheader of an excursion. Part one will be a MARC equipment train from Hagerstown to Romney via former Western Maryland Railway and today's South Branch Valley. At Romney, West Virginia, passengers will transfer to a chartered Potomac Eagle excursion train for a run to Sycamore Bridge. Of course this will be a round trip affair and a must for rare mileage collectors. For more information, call 301-739-4665.

Passenger Train Update-March 2004

By Gary Ballard

The year 2004 is showing many bright points for Amtrak. Probably the most important item to start the year with is the fact that federal funding in the amount of \$ 1.2 billion has arrived. Good news for those

of us who take the train, nearly 2.1 million passengers just for the month of December.

Amtrak continues to show climbing ridership numbers from all areas of the country. This only backs up the claim from many citizens, that people enjoy taking the train, whether it be for business or part of a vacation trip. Amtrak's boss, David Gunn, continues to ride the train. Many times he rides across the country and takes notice to both crews and the riding public. Mr. Gunn comes back from these trips and shares his findings with the employees. Whether in person, or in the company newsletter, he says he is impressed with the crews he has met. It is normal for Mr. Gunn to go through a train and occasionally introduce himself to a passenger and ask that person how their trip is going. There are not too many large corporations today, where the boss mingles with the public to see if the company is satisfying them or not.

The real task of getting Amtrak back on solid ground continues. The money received from Capitol Hill will allow for needed repairs to the coach fleet. Critics can no longer say "the money only goes to the Northeast Corridor..." Superliner cars are getting rebuilds and maintenance that had been put on hold for too long. Shop forces at Beech Grove are putting new life in Amtrak's 432-car Superliner fleet. The task of lettering such a car has been made quicker and less expensive.

Years ago, workers had a tedious job of removing the old Amtrak decals from the cars. The adhesive on those early red and blue stripes was made to last seven years! Many chemicals were used through the years to remove the vinyl, not the glue. Sand blasting was tried. It was a technique that became deep in environment warnings and safeguards. The sand damaged the windows. Also in today's clean water thinking

world, one has to prevent the waste-sand from getting into the local water table. Razor blades were used to remove the nasty glue from the old decals, by hand! A process that must have taken an entire day.

Today, the sand in sand blasting has been replaced with crushed walnut shells. The walnut blaster removes the old stripes from Amfleet cars, while a powerful water blaster removes the old decals and lettering from the tall Superliners. Many of us in this Chapter may remember watching chapter member Ken Miller apply the new decals to various cars of the Norfolk Southern steam train. Amtrak's new Phase 6 decals are applied much in the same way. The sticky decal is affixed to a paper backing, and pressed onto the side of the car. Then workers take a squeegee and smooth out the wrinkles as the design is laid out against the window band of the car. Eventually, the paper backing is peeled away, leaving the decal on the car. To decorate the entire side of a coach, it is several sections of decals, each 12 feet long and 24 inches high. Now that's one huge wall paper job! To save costs, Amtrak now prints the decals in its own shops, and no longer uses a vendor to do this.

Back east, the Amfleet car fleet is going through repairs often deferred over the last several years. One big repair item has been the inflatable door seals on these cars. The seals are what keeps snow and ice from entering the vestibules in the cold northeast winters. Faulty seals that do not swell up with air against the door when it's closed, results in snow that piles up inside the car. Many travelers going from car to car, not only enter the vestibule, but they enter a small snow storm inside the vestibule. At train speeds of 125 mph, the snow blows in open spaces in the side doors where the seals did not operate. The snow can pile up

to a foot deep on the floor.

The Delaware shops in Wilmington and Bear, are working on about 100 Amfleet cars, many with worn out door seals. The cars are coming back into service with new refurbished interiors for coaches and cafe' cars.

While car repairs go on, passengers can see from their coach windows the work being done to the tracks between Washington and New York. Miles of new ribbon rail with new concrete ties have been laid between Baltimore and Wilmington. New rail and ties are arriving on long work trains as this goes to print. Many interlockings (where tracks switch from one to another) have been replaced with new rail and related components. This is always visible to those riding the trains. Sometimes a train is late because of this track work, but passengers take it in stride when they see for themselves the progress being made.

Not all is a rose. The severe weather this winter has caused some long distance trains to go without their sleeper cars. Boston's winter has been the toughest in 111 years. New York City had the coldest January since 1977. Freeze problems forced the Crescent to go minus sleepers , passengers were notified by phone prior to their trip date of the change. The New York coach yard in Sunnyside had temps below freezing for 20 days straight.

With Amfleet cars being taken out of service for needed repairs, and the weather causing additional delays , management had to cancel some trains and combine numbered trains together. But let us not forget that when old man winter blows, the airlines see the word " cancel " long before the trains do. It has happened before, passengers exiting the train at BWI airport rail station to catch a flight in a winter storm, only for the same nearby shuttle bus to bring them back to the rail station AND THE

TRAIN, to finish their journey because the snow was too deep on the runway. Be careful not to bet the shirt on your back over whether a Congressman was one of those passengers returning from the snow laden airport, but then this article did begin with the news of Amtrak getting it's funding.

Paul Merriman dies at 94

Paul H. Merriman, former president of the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum and the man who laid the foundation for the Southern Railway's steam-excursion program, died January 16th in Winchester, Tennessee.

In 1964, Merriman purchased Southern Railway Engine 4501 for \$5000 from the Kentucky and Tennessee Railroad, and with Southern President D.W. Brosnan's blessing, steamed it to Chattanooga, where it was refurbished.

With the co-operation of Southern Vice-President-Law W. Graham Claytor, Jr., who would become Southern's President in 1967, Merriman watched Engine 4501 haul Southern's first steam excursion in 1966. The locomotive traveled throughout the southeast and into the midwest on other railroads, serving as the catalyst for the rise of much of the South's rail preservation movement of the late 1960's and 1970's. The Southern steam program heightened interest in railroading by the general public, and created many new rail-enthusiast organizations, some of these spawning rail museums that remain active today.

The Southern steam program expanded its scope, adding other engines to the fleet, and expanded geographically northward after the 1982 merger of Southern and Norfolk & Western that created Norfolk Southern, thanks in no small part to N&W's Robert B. Claytor, Graham's brother, who became an NS official.

Merriman had suffered a stroke a number of years ago; his last public appearance was in Chattanooga in 1991 at the NS Steam Program's 25th Anniversary banquet at the Chattanooga Choo-Choo complex. It was the last great gathering of NS-family steam engines and all the key people who kept the program going, including the Claytor brothers, Jim Bistline, Carl Jensen, Bill Purdie, and their spouses.

In due time, Merriman donated the 4501 to the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum, for which he served as president from 1963 until 1979, and the engine continued to operate occasionally until its retirement as a TVRM display a few years ago. "As one of the charter members of TVRM, and our first (and one of only two) presidents, Paul had a great influence on the creation and direction of TVRM. His legacy lives on in our facility, our staff, and our volunteers," said Tim Andrews, TVRM's director of development.

Merriman is survived by his sister, Jean Tallec, his son Marcus, who resides in England, and several grandchildren.

(Information Via TRAINS On-Line and Danville Flyer, Danville, Junction Chapter, Inc. NRHS)

License Plate Update

by Bill Arnold

As you will recall, on June 26, 2003, four hundred-eighty-two (482) valid applications from 457 individuals were turned over to the DMV for processing. Less the 39 sample applications, following is a geographical breakdown of Virginia applicants:

Personalized 169, non-personalized 274.
Roanoke 100, Salem 30, Vinton 14,
Roanoke Valley (other) 59, Southwest,
(Christiansburg West) 54, 81 Corridor
(Staunton North) 15, Lynchburg 19, Other
Central and outside 22, Richmond area 35,

Norfolk area 18, Northern VA 77.

As of December 31, 2003, the DMV had received a total of 889 Virginia applications (374 personalized, 515 non-personalized).

The number doubled in six months. There are some clever personalized plates out there! The most recent noted was MITY J

Make note of these clever plates and let me know and I'll run a list at some future date. My thanks to all of those who helped meet (and exceed) our initial 350 requirement. For those of you who have gotten on the train since then, welcome aboard.

NS Snowfighting

by Brian Crosier

On January 28, I was traveling across Memorial Bridge and was lucky to have the window partially open and heard what sounded like a low flying aircraft down on the Railroad. When I noticed a huge plume



Brian Crosier

of white powder being lifted skyward I immediately parked the truck and grabbed the cameras. As I approached the edge of the Bridge I found what I had dreamed of seeing many times, one of Norfolk Southern's Jet powered snow blowers was busy lifting large chunks of snow and ice from the railroad right of way and literally launching them a considerable distance. I started rolling film only to find that my battery was dead, I resorted to the trusty Canon A-1 that I almost always have on hand and snapped away as the unit traveled west out of the Virginian's south yard at a whooping 1-2 miles per hour, all the time being chased by a Hi-rail truck. Now I think there are probably two records being set here. A. That has got to be the most boring job in the world, following a snow blower around at such a slow pace, and to make it worse it was just back and forth through a railroad yard, not even down the main line. B. That has to be the slowest moving jet powered machine that man has ever produced.

As the machine and its operating men continued west, I drove down to the next crossing to get a few more pictures from the front of the unit. This proved to be a little bit more challenging as all that could be seen for most of the time was a large cloud of powdered snow and ballast, yes ballast. Large chunks of snow and ice were mixed with ballast being shot like projectiles for dozens of yards forward of the noisy contraction. I did not stick around for long as it took a considerable amount of time for the unit to reach me and get into the clear for a few pictures but was neat to see operate. I noticed as the unit approached a highway crossing the blower nozzle was raised away from the asphalt and after a few minutes pondering this it occurred to me that the jet

engine would easily melt the asphalt. I remember a few of the first of these units that I saw in the Roanoke area (not operating) that did not have a directional nozzle and figure that this was something they found was necessary after removing a street or two. I also remember being told that some of the first units were found to be too light and lost traction when the jet was fired up, requiring the use of a pusher or two to make forward movement possible over the thrust of the jet engine.

It was really neat to see this unit in operation but would stress that if you get the chance to see one, make sure to keep a great distance from the unit as it really does kick a lot of debris for a considerable distance in many directions. The day I watched it there was a considerable crosswind and I actually had to clean the windshield of my truck that was parked half a block away. Railfan Responsibly.

While I was watching this unit operate, an UPS delivery truck was making its rounds and got stopped by the crossing in front of the unit. I am not sure if the crew waved him across or if he did it on his own, but around the gates he came. He had a safe distance from the slow moving machine and it made an interesting photo, but is still not an advisable option. Please be careful: Trains can't stop, you can.

Chapter News

by Ken Miller

It is the time of year for a Chapter Directory once again. It has been suggested that we include email addresses in the directory. Since the directory is a private publication, the addresses are not commonly seen outside the membership. We would like to build a list of email addresses for notifications on late notice events as well. If every member who can would send their

address to me at klmiller@rev.net, we will incorporate it into a list and the directory.

The members have an opportunity to purchase the new O. Winston Link CD box set at a special member only price at the March meeting. This will be the ONLY chance to purchase this set at this special price, and it is limited to one per membership either family or regular. This is cash or check only, credit cards will have an additional surcharge. If you cannot make the March meeting, if you contact Grace Helmer at 366-2169 by Sunday, March 21, she will make arrangements for a set for you.

If you have an outstanding balance for previous gift shop purchases (and you know who you are!), all outstanding balances must be paid before any further items can be acquired.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

March 18, 2004 - General Meeting

April 6, 2004 - Board Meeting

April 15, 2004 - General Meeting

May 4, 2004 - Board Meeting

May 20, 2004 - Regular Meeting

June 1, 2004 - Board Meeting

June 17, 2004 - Regular Meeting

July 6, 2004 - Board Meeting

Chapter Outing - Information at the March Meeting.

July 15, 2004 - Regular Meeting

<http://community.roanoke.com/RoanokeChapterNationalRailwayHistoricalSociety>

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