



# Turntable TIMES

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

**Volume 37, Number 12**  
**December 2005**

*The Turntable Times Staff and Contributors  
Send An Entire Trainload of Wishes  
for a Wonderful and Safe Holiday Season!*





# Turntable TIMES

**Volume 37, Number 12  
December 2005**

## **EDITOR**

Kenney Kirkman  
KKIRKMAN50@hotmail.com

## **MIXED FREIGHT**

Robin R. Shavers

## **SMALL RAILS**

Dave Meashey  
kndmeashey@msn.com

## **HISTORIAN**

Kenneth L. Miller  
klmiller@rev.net

All materials should be sent directly to the Editor:  
Kenney Kirkman  
590 Murphy Road  
Collinsville, VA  
24078-2128

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, January 19, 2006 at 7:30 pm. at the Link Museum located in the former N&W Passenger Station, 101 Shenandoah Avenue. We will be holding our Holiday Gathering on our regular meeting night of December 15, 2005 at our former location of the Fellowship Hall of the church. There will be plenty of food for all. Gathering begins at 6:30 pm/

Please be sure to note our weather cancellation policy below, please note, this policy also applies to Board Meetings.

## *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 January, 2006 issue of Turntable Times is Monday, December 19, 2005. Please send articles, information, and exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

### **Meeting Cancellation Policy**

Any Chapter meeting will be considered cancelled if any of the following conditions are due to weather: Roanoke City Schools are closed on the day of or for the day after the meeting, or Virginia Western night classes are cancelled for the night of a meeting.

### **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**

Bluefield has never been known as a warm place; early on this January 1940 morning the mercury hovered at 2° below zero striking residents as an exceptional case. The railroad does not stop, despite the weather, trains must go through, as two sets of electric "motors" are just arriving with an eastbound coal train amid a herd of other motive power. Norfolk and Western Photo/K.L. Miller Collection

## Mixed Freight - December

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

Railroad partnerships have been going on for years and new ones are being initiated even to this day. Sometime during the first quarter for 2006, Union Pacific and CSX will commence operating a 55 car train of new reefers (refrigerated boxcars) from Wallula, Washington to Albany, New York hopefully within 124 hours. Each car has the capacity of four 53 foot trailers. The produce to be hauled will be apples, pears, potatoes and onions. The train is to be interchanged in Chicago and is to remain intact as a seamless operation. The train will be serving customer Railex LLC which owns and operates the loading and unloading facilities at both ends of the operation.

As a railfan and admirer of old structures, it always does my spirit good to hear or read that a train depot no longer used for its when built purpose is being restored to become again a useful part of the community. After years of negotiations with numerous private interests and government entities, nearly \$2.1 million in contracts to restore the former B&O train depot at Harpers Ferry, WV. The restoration will have the station looking as it did back in the 1930s. It was built in 1894. The station is to be used by the town of Harpers Ferry, MARC commuters, Amtrak and The National Park Service. Completion is hoped to be completed by the end of 2007.

There has been much press this year about the future of the Western Maryland Scenic Railway. Maybe the following is a sign of better times ahead. On September 1st, the tourist line opened a new gift shop on the second floor of its station headquarters in Cumberland, MD. The original gift shop will remain open. The second floor

location will offer more railroad merchandise, especially Thomas The Tank Engine and his friends.

Also, the WMSR's board of directors has determined that the goal of the railroad is to serve as a testimony to the past, a self-sufficient enterprise for the present and a growing attraction for the future. In order for the railroad to succeed at these goals, it needs to remain an independent operation focused on the development and preservation of the railroad as a nonprofit corporation with an educational mission. This position was presented as part of an executive summary submitted to the Commission charged with developing a five-year plan for the WMSR. A study made this past summer proved that the WMSR has a \$5.5 million economic impact on the Cumberland area which is the equivalent of 189 full time jobs.

A lot of us whom have a thing for trains also have a thing for other vehicles that are confined to tracks such as trolley cars and subways. I have always liked trolleys. I was elated to hear that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority began operating 18 rebuilt PCCs along Route 15 - Girard Street in Philly. The line is eight miles long, and the service began on September 4th.

It has been a while since I have reported on The High Bridge Railroad Club. Over two years, ago the little group had to give up its home at Longwood University's Visual Arts Center in downtown Farmville. A lot of work went into bringing an unoccupied lower level to a presentable and model railroad friendly state. Rain water was a main problem to correct. Modern ceiling lights have been installed. A local sign maker created a very nice looking and professional sign that hangs over the entrance. The local police department donated an awning to shield members and visitors from the ele-

ments. The black and white club sign, complete with a steam locomotive figure, goes great with black and white awning. The group, which consists of about 12 members, is currently constructing a layout for HO and O scale trains. They hope to have the O scale up and running for Christmas. They meet every Tuesday from 7 p.m. til about 9:30 p.m. First Tuesdays of the month the group assembles at a local eatery for a dinner business meeting at 6 p.m. It goes without saying that everyone present at the November dinner meeting expressed their unhappiness with the railroad no longer being a part of the Farmville community. At least the station still stands and is in very good shape. A red caboose is stationed on the west end of the station. Rail Projects Clear Hurdles

Older train switches in Richmond's Acca Yard were among several rail projects recently recommended for state funding. Other projects would extend commuter service in Northern Virginia, enlarge freight capacity in Suffolk, and give CSX access to a marine-container facility in Portsmouth. Crewe and Petersburg would also get rail construction. Another set of proposals under consideration could help the Port of Richmond as well as possibly provide a staging area for Amtrak trains at Richmond's Main Street Station.

The rail board is expected to vote on the funding November 30th. The Commonwealth Transportation Board must then approve the work. The largest of the nine finalists was a \$7.5 million request to partner with Norfolk Southern to implement rail improvement in Virginia, West Virginia, and Ohio. Norfolk Southern wants to construct a new "double stack" route from Hampton Roads through Roanoke and on across the mountains to the Midwest. As part of the \$32 million project, Norfolk Southern wants to construct a truck-to-

train transfer facility in Roanoke. A list of the proposals can be found on the web at: <http://www.drpt.state.va.us/downloads/files/REF-Apps-2005.pdf>

(Above excerpts from a Richmond Times Dispatch article by Chip Jones, submitted to Turntable Times by Mr. Robin R. Shavers).

## Small Rails

by Dave Meashey

The Big Lick Big Train Operators held their November meeting on Sunday, November 20th at the home of Jerry and Frances Viemiester in Moneta. Attendance was light despite the beautiful weather. Karen and Tom Harris and I were there plus a few neighborhood children and Jerry's grandson.

We had a grand time watching trains running back and forth on Jerry's "under construction" garden railroad. Jerry is using some interesting concrete-based building materials for his garden railroad, which should stand up well to the weather. Presently about 75-80 linear feet of track is available for operation. This sounds like a fair distance, even for a point-to-point run, but large scale trains can eat up that distance in a hurry.

One of Jerry's young neighbors operated the trains most of the time while the rest of us admitted them. Jerry's power supply is a choice after my own heart. It is the top-of-the-line American Flyer 350 watt transformer from about 50 years ago. Jerry built his own rectifiers to work with this power supply, and it is still performing admirably. I just recently purchased a heavy duty MRC large scale 10 amp power pack, so that I could keep my 50 year old 175 watt American Flyer transformer as a back-up unit.

We thought this just could be our last

meeting for 2005, but Jerry mentioned that we could have another meeting in Carl Weaver's workshop for December. After December the chance for an ice or snow-storm puts club activities on hold for a few months.

## **Passenger Train Update- December 2005**

by Gary Ballard

Great news coming from historical preservation efforts. Most railfans know of the FL9 locomotive built by EMD. Through the 1950s, the famous F unit was almost the headed power for all diesel powered passenger trains in the US. A product of General Motors, the F-7 is probably the better known of all the numbered series of the model. With its classic bulldog nose and streamlined carbody, the F unit was a winner with many passenger railroads.

The New Haven Railroad wanted the F unit for its passenger trains, but the NH called for specifications that were unique to it's operating territory. Requirements called for electric power on the point while in the underground confines of New York City, and then diesel power once the trains traveled through Connecticut's urban areas north of the Big Apple. Thus, the FL9 was born, a rare version of the F unit to satisfy the needs of the NH. Now the railroad could run passenger trains without an engine change.

The FL9 could pick up third rail electric current with the addition of small contact shoes mounted on the locomotives trucks. This was needed as the engine took its train, underground, to Grand Central Station. Third rail current provided the juice to propel the locomotives traction motors and allowed the diesel prime mover to be shut down to avoid filling the station with

unwanted fumes and smoke.

After a long career, the FL9 workhorses have been recently retired. A farewell run was made for the enjoyment of thousands on Sunday, Oct 30th. The last run for the trusty FL9 represents much proud history for the locomotive. Through the years, the name of the owner changed on the sides of the FL9s. Metro North became the successor to the New Haven's passenger business. The paint scheme changed several times, but eventually the NH colors of orange, black and white returned to the FL9. It was common occurrence for riders on Amtrak's Acela to peer out the window, on the New York-Boston mainline, and see a local commuter train with the diehard FL9 on the head end making stops in Stamford, Bridgeport and New Haven. The locomotives were also visitors to various other commuter routes running north out of New York.

Metro North spokesperson, Daniel Brucker said the farewell trip sold out well in advance. He added the company knew thousands would be trackside to photograph the special excursion train as it made its way through rural Connecticut. The train departed Stamford, and went on to Norwalk and Danbury. Running along the scenic Housatonic Railroad through New Milford and reached the historic depot in Canaan, where the train was turned for the trip back.

Closer to home, The CSX Santa Train will make another deeply loved trip this year. The date is scheduled for Nov. 19th with special guest Grammy winning country singer Naomi Judd. The train has been a joint effort of the Johnson City, TN Chamber of Commerce and CSX Transportation. Both the city and railroad return joy and appreciation to the people who live along the tracks in southwest Virginia and eastern Kentucky. Now in its 63rd year, the train will have Santa dispensing over 15 tons of gifts to

children at 15 stops during the 110 mile journey. More than 50 volunteers participate, especially in loading up the train. Judd is proud of her Kentucky heritage and says she's happy to be on board a special train.

Roanoke Chapter members got a chance to enjoy the fall season on board an excursion train operated by the Shenandoah Valley Railroad on Oct. 30th. Several Chapter members worked as car hosts, while a bus brought other members to ride the train. The train traveled from Verona, just north of Staunton, VA., for 15 miles to Pleasant Valley. The SVRR ran trips every Sunday during October. The train was an instant hit with those riding, with much beautiful scenery along the way.

Coaches on the SVRR have an interesting history. Three cars, from the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad, were built by Pullman in 1928. Three other coaches, from the Grand Trunk Railroad, were built in 1948 and rebuilt by Canadian National as recent as 1986. Two diesel locomotives powered the train, a GP38 built by EMD in 1970 for the Reading-Pennsylvania Seashore Line and a Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton switcher built in 1953. They were coupled at each end of the train in push-pull fashion. Chapter member Eddie Mooneyhan and his train crew deserve a big thank you for a great trip. The trip length is just right for an entire family, and the price is a real winner. Let's hope the SVRR will repeat the trips for 2006! Rare mileage seekers got a chance to view Amtrak's Coast Starlight run on an altered route on Oct. 23rd. Due to track work, train 11 was detoured between Sacramento and Los Angeles via the San Joaquin Valley and over the famous Tehachapi Pass, and on to Mojave and Lancaster, CA. Normal intermediate stops were covered by bus or other trains. Those bound for LAX got a rare treat taking in the

scenery over the mountain route as Amtrak was making the move to get a set of Starlight equipment back to L.A.

Get out your old railroad maps as another historic line is fading away. The Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Railway was a heavy ore carrier in Minnesota. Fans of the DM&IR know of a steep grade known as Proctor Hill. This 2.2% grade was the reason for having giants of steam such as Missabe's 2-8-8-2s along with Bessemer and Lake Erie 2-10-4s. Missabe's big 2-8-8-4 lumbering Yellowstones never were regulars on the Hill, rather they operated north in ore road service.

Today, Canadian National is the owner of this DM&IR route. Last month, CN began removing one of the double tracks that make up Proctor Hill on the railroad. The unforgiving grade was built in 1893 by the Duluth, Missabe and Northern. The 7 mile up hill stretch is found between the ore docks and a rail yard in Proctor.

Northern Virginia rail commuters are taking notice of VRE cutting back service in response to higher fuel costs. Manassas Line train No. 334 has had low ridership numbers averaging daily of 60. This is sad news for a late morning train that arrives in Washington, DC's Union Station at 11:30. As of Nov. 28th, train No. 334 will be cancelled. VRE also plans to cut the operation of trains on the Friday after Thanksgiving citing the decision will reduce its afternoon cleaning schedule. The bulk of VRE passenger counts comes during the weekdays, with about 85% being Federal employees who take the train to Washington. Though VRE officials realize that not all the public is happy with the service cutbacks, the railroad is clearly protecting its core customer base within sight of ever looming budget constraints.

Finally, Union Pacific has passed out bulletins to its employees warning them of

divulging in company matters not meant for the general public. Directly it pertains to sharing, perhaps, special railroad movements with railfans and railfan Internet sites. Though UP is knowledgeable of such sites put up by people who like trains, the company isn't too sure these sites are always being manned or conducted by ordinary folk that is railfans and railbuffs. UP is warning its work force that it may be hard to tell whether an inquiry for train information isn't coming from a terrorist halfway around the world.

Be safe out there!

## **Gunn has left the building**

By Gary Ballard

**O**n Wednesday, Nov. 9, Amtrak's Board of Directors fired its top man, CEO David Gunn. The news hit like wild fire and went quickly to the media world and onto employee bulletins across the country. The move surprised many in and outside the company. Much struggle has been going on with politics from Capitol Hill while simultaneously Gunn has been fixing up the railroad after years of deferred maintenance. A tough man on having too many employees, yet David Gunn showed his Congressional critics more credibility than any other Amtrak leader since the days of Graham Claytor.

Some of his first moves were ending the not so great Service Guarantee, in which a passenger unhappy for any reason could get free future travel allowance for the segment of his or her trip they were unhappy with. Though this measure was to follow the tradition set by Sears, where by a customer is allowed to return a broken Craftsman tool for a free replacement with no questions asked. Several rail passengers saw this one

coming and took advantage of Amtrak, and almost made the company go broke it seemed. Gunn saw that worn track and switches got replaced. Cars and locomotives got needed repairs and rebuilding after years of neglected maintenance. He traveled the national system and visited with many employees on each trip.

On Sundays, he was known to dress in Polo shirts and short pants and sat with passengers on the trains asking them whether their trip was all right. Although he has been vocal in abolishing the Assistant Conductor position and outsourcing food service beyond the company, many at Amtrak will tell you he has been working on getting things done for the future. Many Amtrak employees do not wish to see a changing of the guard right now, taken the fact nobody knows who will be his replacement.

Go further, and notice the feelings on Capitol Hill and how certain senators are showing disdain for his termination. Senators Trent Lott and John McCain have been Amtrak's hardest to convince over the years. Yet, after Amtrak's board released Gunn from his post, Mr. Lott remarked the action was a bad one and a step back for Amtrak.

Wow, talk of building credible standings on The Hill. Amtrak Board chairman, David M. Laney, said Gunn's enthusiasm for the rail carrier seems to have drained away. David Gunn described the reason for his dismissal as being ideological. The Bush administration has made no love for Amtrak, telling the American public in so many words that trains are a waste and that nobody takes the train anymore.

Both the Senate and the House have approved bills to aid the rail carrier over the next 6 years, promising far more support than what the White House wants to offer.

Gunn said, "Obviously, what their goal is and it's been their goal from the beginning is to liquidate the company."

Now several lawmakers are wondering if what Amtrak's board did was legal. First, the board is entirely made up of Bush appointees. Second, not all the 7 seats are filled. Only 4 seats are filled, and there's some issue about confirmation with two of those seats. The question is, does the board have enough body to cast such a vote of firing its CEO?

Senator Charles Schummer, Dem.NY, questioned the legal aspect of what the board did. He said, "Gunn is more legitimate than the board is." On the Bush policy, the senator added, "The policy difference is the board wants to kill Amtrak, and Gunn wants it to prosper."

Leading up to this, was an Amtrak vote in September to split off operations of the carrier to public bid, an act backed by the Bush administration. Gunn was never in favor of severing off parts of the company. That was the straw that cracked the camel's back. Gunn spoke with Railway Age magazine soon after he was let go, and said the country is about to see White House backed "train offs," a term meaning you can expect to see certain trains dropped.

According to newspapers in Washington on that Wednesday morning, the railroad announced to all that it's CEO had been released, and then they notified Mr. Gunn.

Reportedly, Gunn was told to resign. He refused, saying that he was not going to abandon his employees. At that point he was released of his duties. Finally, David Gunn prepared a departing statement to his board, it read...

"For your information, I did not resign. I was removed. It's been fun. Good luck."

He told Railway Age magazine, that the Bush administration wants to destroy

Amtrak. He added, "I stood in their way. That's why they fired me."

## **Gathering at Victoria 10-29-05**

by Skip Salmon

The annual Gathering of former Virginian Railway employees was held in Victoria, VA this year on the last Saturday of October as usual. There were over 100 in attendance.

Master of Ceremonies Ryland Marston welcomed us at the Victoria Restaurant. He mentioned the names of 7 former VGN Brethren that passed away since the Gathering last year. In his comments he recalled a comment of Stuart Saunders, president of the N&W at the merger in 1959. "Stuart Saunders would really be proud of this group. Remember he said in '59 that all of you would be gone in 10 years."

There was an outstanding buffet lunch followed by a visit to the pride of Victoria, Ken Miller's restored VGN 342 caboose, now the centerpiece of the new Rail Park and Green Way. Curator of the 342, Greg Elam, was proud as the father of a new born babe showing off the preeminent example of Virginian rolling stock that is now on the Town of Victoria's automobile decals.

Aubrey Wiley was there selling his outstanding black and white 2006 all-Virginian Railway calendars. I was able to announce the upcoming "Friends of the Virginian @ Mile-Post 2006" event we will host at the O. Winston Link Museum in Roanoke March 31-April 2, 2006. Photos were taken and ones from the past gathering were shared. It was like a family reunion.

Eleven of the Brethren attended from Roanoke.

## Shenandoah Valley Railroad Excursions

by Eddie Mooneyham and Brian Crosier

The October Excursions were a success thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers that came out to provide safe and educational guidance to the nearly 5000 patrons who came out to enjoy the wonderful world of train travel. On the behalf of the Shenandoah Valley Railroad, the Eastern Shore Railroad Inc., and the Greater Shenandoah Valley Development Corporation, I would like to extend my thanks to the following volunteers for their services: Roanoke Chapter members: Jim Overholser, S.R. Winegard, Brian Crosier, Willard Hamill, F. M. Hite, Brent Wigel, Rick Rader and Dorr Tucker; and local volunteers: Ben True, Andrew Martin, Percy Wilkins, Bill Brathwaite, Gary Grey and Marcy. Volunteers for the Virginia Central RR: Bucky Chisholm, Bill Garrett, and Eric. Emergency technicians Cheryl Obenschain and Joe Wood. Also to the many employees of the Eastern Shore Railroad who traveled far to provide the train for the

Brian Crosier Photo Chapter (and other) crew members of the first SV excursion weekend train.

enjoyment of the passengers. And to the "Extra list" of volunteers, Bill Carson, Gary Ballard and Richard Shell.

The scenery was marvelous and as the month came to a conclusion the leaves had just begun to turn providing a kaleidoscope of color through the windows of the vintage cars. Passengers young and old, from near and some quite far away, came out to ride behind the Shenandoah Valley Railroads two diesels along the old "Valley Line" from Verona to Pleasant Valley and return. The ride was fifteen miles in each direction and lasted roughly two hours. Townsfolk who lived along the right of way came on board to see what their homes looked like from a different perspective, some came home to visit an area they grew up in long ago, and others just came to ride a train on a line that has not seen a regular passenger train in over fifty years.

One couple came from North Dakota and was on a circle trip of landmarks up the east



coast and made it a point to ride this train. Many passengers were riding a train for the very first time, and not all of them were as young as you might think. One gentleman was in his sixties and was enjoying the serenity of train travel for the first time. In his words, "simply marvelous." After we spoke for a while, he was planning trips to many tourist lines along the east coast and would ride the Acela. He even overcame his fear of heights to look out the vestibule door and admire the 130 plus year old architecture of the four trestles along this section of line. The stonework is exquisite and it is hard to believe it was done mostly by hand and mule. The technologies of two centuries worked well together to bring enjoyment to nearly 5000 people throughout the month. Thanks to all who came out to enjoy the trips.

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS**

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

**The May Meeting Location will be at the O. Winston Link Museum.  
See Inside for More Details**

May 3 - Board Meeting

May 19 - Regular Meeting

June 7 - Board Meeting

June 16 - Regular Meeting

July 5 - Board Meeting

July 21 - Regular Meeting

August 2 - Board Meeting

August 18 - General Meeting

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

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Editor, Turntable Times  
Roanoke Chapter NRHS  
P.O. Box 13222  
Roanoke, VA 24032-1322

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