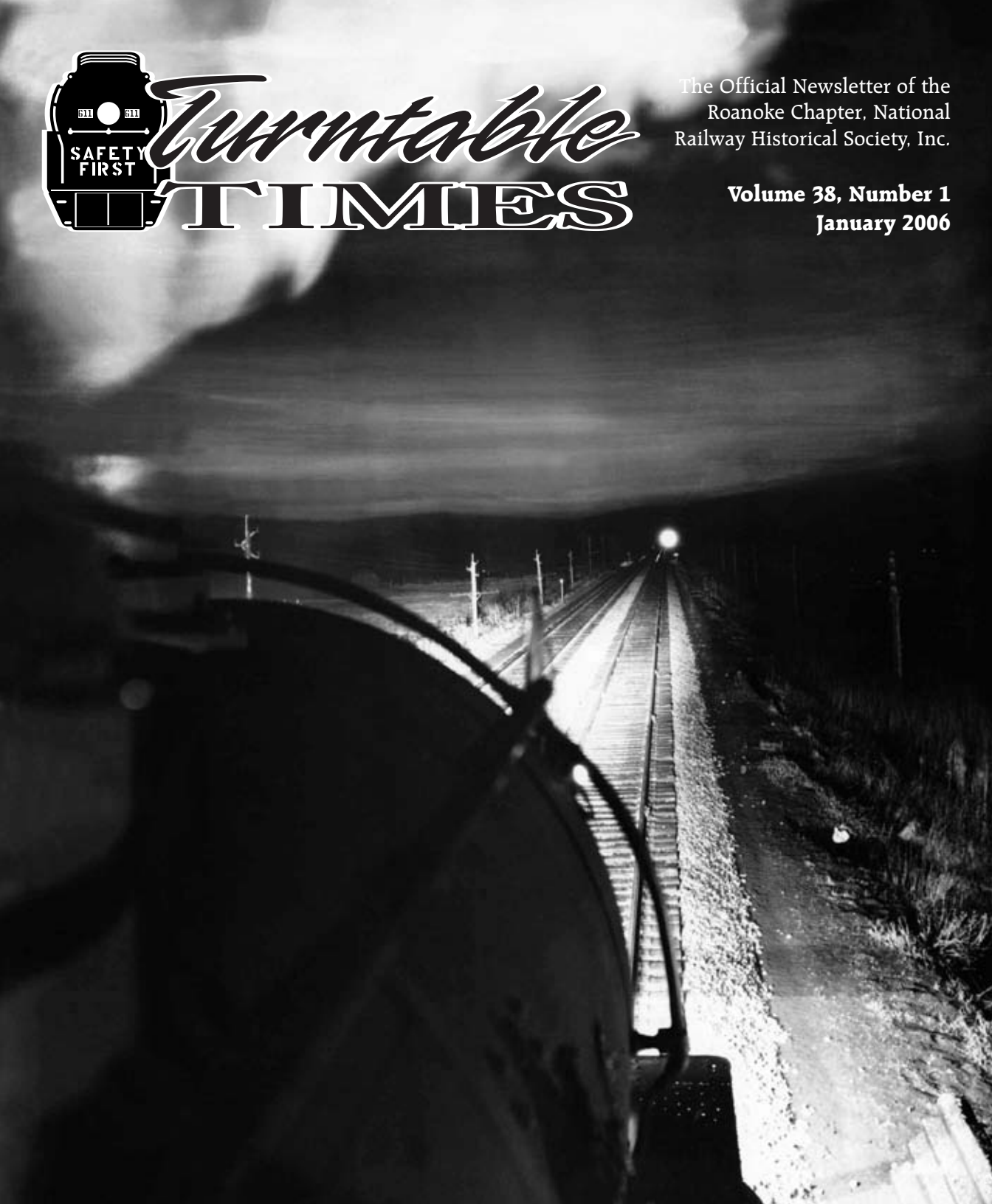




Turntable TIMES

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

Volume 38, Number 1
January 2006





Turntable TIMES

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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, 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 discussing the reschedule of the holiday gathering.

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

Program for January Membership meeting. Come along for some hot pacing action. See some of Norfolk Southern's finest in modern technology hauling heavy tonnage through the snow laced hills of West Virginia and Ohio, from Bluefield through Williamson and up to Kenova. Get up close and personal with EMD and GE's as they strut their stuff on the big screen. Approx. 40 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 February 2006 issue of Turntable Times is Wednesday January 18, 2006. 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. Please use your best judgement on meeting cancellations, if the conditions are not met such as school not being in session, please check the website (back cover) for last minute details.

Cover Photo

It may come as a surprise to some, but Winston Link did not take the first night photos on the N&W. This image by N&W Photographer Bryan Beard was the cover of the January 1936 N&W Magazine. 70 years later, the message holds true, a clear track ahead for our family. "There will be no barriers to the continued progress if every member of our Family will do his part..." Norfolk and Western Photo/K.L. Miller Collection

Holiday Gathering Postponed

It had to happen sooner or later, our Holiday Gathering scheduled for Thursday; December 15 came directly in the middle of an ice/sleet storm. Just as the forecasters began calling for the weather earlier in the week, this event was enough for us to decide Wednesday, December 14 about 2 PM to postpone the event.

Wanda Troutman, Bonnie Molinary and I first discussed the postponement on Tuesday evening, and decided wait for the weather forecast the next afternoon. We were concerned that with the potentially unsafe conditions, even if school had not been cancelled would not be conducive to a good attendance at the event much work goes into.

I sent out a blanket email to all those whom I had an email address for, about 35 people on Wednesday afternoon, and had the notice posted on our website simultaneously. Please provide us with an email address so that last minute information can be sent out, we do not send anything but important communications. Anyhow, the event would have been cancelled by our inclement weather policy, posted on the opposite page of the newsletter regardless, please take a minute to review that, it is in effect for ANY chapter function despite place or time. The last thing any of us want is an accident of any kind.

We have now rescheduled the event to Saturday, February 18th at the Fellowship Hall at the First Presbyterian Church as usual. The time is still at 6:30 and those who offered to prepare some food, we are still counting on you. Naturally, weather can be a factor in February, to be sure of event, the best way to find out will be checking the website, as soon as it is decided, the information will be posted.

Mixed Freight - January

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

I don't know what happened but somehow an important sentence or two became omitted in my last column concerning The High Bridge Railroad Club in Farmville. The group, with the help of Farmville town officials, found a building to call home. That new home is now in the lower level of Farmville's theatrical building at 106 Fourth Street in downtown Farmville. All of the improvements and projects mentioned in my last column apply to the club's current facility. The town even takes care of the club's electric bill which really comes in handy since the heat source is two electric space heaters.

Earlier last year, I gave an account of progress being made at numerous railroad related facilities from Crewe to Pamplin City. I noted that a goal of the Crewe Railroad Museum was to acquire a steam locomotive for static display. On Thursday November 17th, that goal was achieved with the arrival of 2-8-0 No. 604 from the Fort Eustis Army facility located in eastern Virginia. The locomotive has been painted glossy black with the tires trimmed in white. NORFOLK & WESTERN has been neatly applied to the tender. As we all know, the real No. 604 on the N&W was a class J 4-8-4. That is my major gripe with that museum, if they acquire a locomotive or car, it is automatically painted and lettered for the N&W even if it is not. (Editor's Note: Amen!)

The older I get, STOP SNICKERING, the faster time seems to roll by. On Saturday December 10th, I journeyed to Crewe to check out the newly acquired steam locomotive at the Crewe Railroad Museum. While having lunch and viewing Norfolk Southern switching operations, I thought about the Virginian cabooses No. 342 over in Victoria. I

had been meaning to visit that caboose for months. With a lull on the former N&W high iron at that moment, I decided to drive the 16 miles to Victoria to visit 342. The time factor hit me as I read the information posted near the caboose about the caboose. It arrived on the property on December 22nd, 2004. I thought to myself in shock, Has It Been Almost A Year Already? It seemed only a few months ago when a photo of the 342 on the rear of an east-bound Norfolk Southern freight graced the January 2005 Turntable Times front cover. The 342 is in good shape and was decorated with a Noel wreath and a few Yuletide lights. The surrounding grounds were clean and well kept.

At that same time period on December 21st, 2004 the Buckingham Branch began operating on the former C&O line between Richmond and Clifton Forge via Charlottesville. That was a VERY cold day.

Last November I reported that the Blue Ridge Chapter NRHS was looking for a new meeting facility. They have secured such a location. The latest meeting location is Charley's at 707 Graves Mill Road off the Lynchburg Expressway. Members and guest arrive at 6:00 p.m. for dinner and the actual meeting commences around 7:00 p.m. The same procedure is observed for the odd number month Fun Nights. Charley's is not charging us for the room we use.

Most of us have probably received more data about what Hurricane Katrina did to the Gulf Coast than what the terrorists did back in 2001. Railroadwise, unless you put forth some effort to find information for yourself, you probably did not hear or read too much on how the railroad's were effected. In a nutshell, Norfolk Southern was polishing the railhead within 16 days after Katrina struck. Crews inspected 1,400 miles of track, removed over 5,500 downed trees,

installed 11,000 new crossties and hauled in and dumped over 55,000 tons of ballast. More than 65 of the company's police officers assisted emergency response organizations.

2005 Officers and Directors

At the December Board meeting the board elected the following officers to lead the Chapter during 2006. Please support them and the Chapter in all its endeavors during the year.

President Ken Miller
Vice President Brian Crosier
Secretary Walt Alexander
Treasurer Wanda Troutman
National Director Carl Jensen
Director at Large Jim Cosby
Director at Large Bill Mason

Our thanks go to all the candidates who ran this year, and our retiring Directors; Dave Meashey and Lawanda Ely.

Here and There

by Kenney Kirkman

The city of Norfolk has reached an agreement with Norfolk Southern to buy a five-mile segment of track for a proposed starter light rail line. The route would go from Eastern Virginia Medical Center through downtown to Newtown and Kempsville roads. About 12,000 daily riders are projected. (From the Virginian Pilot via Potomac Rail News).

Today, the Strasburg Railroad handles no freight. The once familiar covered hoppers of plastic pellets are gone. The road is working to secure some inbound lumber business so that it can continue to be a common carrier, not just in name only. (From Dec, 2005 Odds and Ends Column, by Roy L. Hudson, Philadelphia Chapter newsletter 'Cinders').

Back to the steam age—Zimbabwe recently announced that it was moving back into the steam age by recommissioning 10 coal-fired locomotives to cope with the country's economic crisis. The announcement was made by the state-owned National Railways of Zimbabwe, which has been plagued by breakdowns and cancellations due to fuel shortages. (From *The 470*, December, 2005).

The state of New Mexico has reached a tentative deal to buy some 100 miles of rail line between Belen, Albuquerque and Santa Fe for a planned commuter train service. Service on the first portion, between Belen and Bernalillo, is scheduled to begin in January, and planners are hoping to get trains rolling into Santa Fe by 2008. (From *Albuquerque Journal* via Tampa Bay Chapter newsletter 'Overboard').

In Seattle, the George Benson Waterfront Streetcar service was shut down in mid-November. Seattle Art Museum plans to construct a \$85 million sculpture which requires the streetcar barn and Broad Street station to be razed. The goal is to have the streetcars back in service by spring 2007. The waterfront line is two miles long and carries 400,000 passengers a year. (From 'The Transfer', Oregon Electric Railway newsletter, via 'Interchange', Baltimore Chapter newsletter).

New Orleans recently resumed service on some of its streetcar lines, using the old green streetcars. The newer red cars were heavily damaged by Hurricane Katrina floodwaters. (Various sources).

The nation's 41st President now has a locomotive named for him and painted in his honor. Union Pacific No. 4141, painted like Air Force One, was revealed to George H.W. Bush on October 18th near College Station, Texas, home of his presidential library and museum. (From 'The Fast Mail', 20th Century Railroad Club in Chicago via

'The Keystone', Pittsburgh Chapter newsletter).

Beginning this past July 2005, Norfolk Southern gradually began moving its personnel from the Spring St. headquarters that served Southern Railway and successor NS for over 90 years to a more modern facility at 1200 Peachtree St NE that formerly housed the offices of AT&T. What will happen to the former buildings, known as original 99 Spring Street building, constructed in 1912, and the 125 building, which was constructed in 1928, is unknown. They are not on the National Register. Also, uncertain is the fate of the 175 building and the more modern 185 building. (From an article by Doug Bess, November 2005 Atlanta Chapter newsletter 'The Hot Box').

More than 100 years after Southern Pacific Railroad's 12-mile Lucin Cutoff wooden trestle first crossed the Great Salt Lake, and more than 10 years after it was dismantled, the bridge continues to live on. Since 1993, Trestlewood, a Blackfoot lumber company, has been selling salvaged wood from the 1904 trestle to people who want a piece of history in their homes or businesses. Wood sold from the historic structure comes with a certificate verifying its origin, which many homeowners cherish as much as the look of the salt-stained timber, said Bob Cannon, Trestlewood's vice-president of sales. (From AP, 10/12 via American Rail Link, Oct. 19, 2005 - George Read via Ed Mayover via 'The Transfer Table', Wilmington Chapter).

And to some folks, deer hunting season means nearly anything! A man was recently arrested in upstate New York for refusing to get off the Canadian Pacific Railway train tracks for an oncoming train because he was preparing to shoot a deer! Rather than get out of the way, the 68 year-old man put his hand up to halt the train as he lined up a shot at a whitetail deer, police said. The

train, a CPR work extra, could stop before it struck the hunter, who then stepped off the tracks, allowing the train to resume its trip. The hunter was charged with trespassing by CPR police, and was also found NOT to be carrying a hunting license! (From TRAIN NEWS WIRE via 'The Lake Shore Timetable', newsletter of the Lake Shore Railway Historical Society, Inc.).

Small Rails

by Dave Meashey

The Big Lick Big Train Operators did not hold a December meeting after all. The club will probably not meet again until March.

The O. Winston Link Museum had a fine Lionel-style train layout on display for the holidays. The layout was constructed and run by the local O gauge enthusiasts. Two ovals of track were constructed near the outer edge of the layout. A third figure eight track ran through the center of the layout.

Various trains graced the outer ovals, while the Lionel Polar Express was the featured train on the figure eight track. Various Department 56, Plasticville, and Lionelville buildings helped to populate the layout – along with figures, vehicles, trees and shrubs. A few lighted accessories were also on the layout.

The layout was a visual delight, and I hope many of you got to see it in operation. It certainly kindled many fond memories of the in-store demonstration layouts from the mid-1950s for me. I'm glad that today's children can experience layouts like this one. For me at least, these layouts represent part of the joys of the holiday season.

Nooseletter

by Ken Miller

NO that is not a typo in the headline, at times the newsletter IS like a noose around your neck, always there and sometimes the noose is tight.

Occasionally, some folks criticize the Turntable Times for typos or poor grammar. Indeed, things should be proofed carefully, and it is not a problem to complain, however the members of the staff of Turntable Times would like to ask a simple question. Have you offered to do the typing, editing, photo work, layout, written articles or mailing the issue? Unfortunately, in the very broad sense of volunteer projects, those that tend to criticize rarely are the ones who do the job. If a member knows how to do this job so well, and I think I speak for all involved, the job is open.

For those who have not been involved in the process, let me review some of the effort involved to get these few sheets of paper in your hand most every month. The Turntable Times is an all-volunteer effort, it takes time, a lot of time. Editor Kenney Kirkman spends an average of 18-20 hours a month. He spends his time going through other Chapter's newsletters, searching out material, typing articles submitted to him, or writing articles himself. He then emails it to me for final layout and checking. Kenney has to have the material to me in time for me to make it into the form you see it.

The newsletter is often an ongoing job for me. It is never completely done in one concentrated time frame, therefore difficult to pin down exact production time. As some of you know, I work for myself, and if I don't bill an hour of time, I don't get paid, it really is as simple as that. I don't have other income, I'm not wealthy, or just sit with my feet propped up collecting checks. Most freelance people who work out of their home office rarely, if ever actually bill for the full amount of hours they put in a job, which of course, cuts their pay, but it is a pride thing; I am certainly no exception.

I get the emails from Kenney and bring them into a page layout program translating all the funny characters that Microsoft creates for you, rather than using plain text,

removing all the formatting that it puts in as well, finally a spell check. There are a wide variety of terms, names and such that spell checkers do not recognize in the railroad field so that takes even longer. At least an hour to two depending on the size of the newsletter. If Kenney has told me that is all he has, then I begin to format the text, and place it in the template for page layout.

Pages are laid out in what are called "printer spreads" depending on the size of the issue, pages do not necessarily follow in order in a layout program, adding pages to a newsletter means reflowing the formatted text. Then I move on to any images submitted. What comes as a huge surprise to some folks is that the file you see on your screen is probably not even close to decent enough for publication. Color images are converted to gray scale, image size adjusted to correct resolution, levels adjusted to printer specifications and a bunch of other adjustments to improve photo quality. For small images, maybe 15 minutes each, larger images, up to an hour or more retouch time.

Please don't get me wrong, in the digital word, having these abilities is phenomenal, I was brought up in a system before computers and believe me, I do not want to go back, but it does put more work on the designer. Designers should know the techniques and how to get proper results when film is output, however many designers, including ones at top ad agencies, both in Roanoke and much larger cities never master or understand these things, and a lot is fixed before they even see the finished proof as Richard Shell can readily attest.

With photos in place, now we watch how the text flows. If everything works the text flows in, around the photos and finishes at the very bottom of the text block on the back cover. Since this is real life that has never happened for me. The text is either too short, or too long. Too short, I have to find material to fill out the issue, too long

means add a page, or two. This is a juggling act, it is impossible to add a single page, 2 is minimum, 3 impossible, 4 regular. Then you go back and reflow the text. Too long? Add two more pages; too short, go back to finding material to fill in. Now I am about 3 hours into this project and am just slightly closer to finishing than I was an hour before.

I do have a bunch of articles from old N&W Magazines which I feel are of some interest, however, most are too long to fit the remaining space. The next step is writing something up. Now bear in mind here, that this meter is running, the deadline for getting the issue to the printer is rapidly approaching, while I having paying jobs waiting.

To use old articles means someone has to type them, or OCR (optical character recognition) them, which usually leads to spending nearly as much time making corrections as retyping.

Often, it is far simpler to write something, at least in theory, but coming up with that, as folks like Gordon Hamilton can tell, is not always easy, and requires research, and when you begin that, you find a whole set of other things that send you off on side tracks. Some folks say, just put a photo in there, but that requires work as well, picking a photo, writing a caption, scanning and retouching=more time.

Now we are at nearly 5 hours after finally finding things to fill out the issue, next is find a cover photo. If you look back over the past few years, you will find most of photos have originated from my collection, sooner or later, we are going to have a blank cover unless someone comes up with some photos to offer. Next a new photo is scanned, retouched, and a caption written, now we are at about six hours total time. Another check of spelling, grammar (yes, I know, some of you think these are never done on the Turntable Times!) but each issue is usu-

ally checked 3 or more times. Now if all goes well, I am ready to collect all the documents, photos and fonts, make a final PDF (Adobe's Portable Document Format) to check, then print it out full size on large sheets of expensive paper and burn a CD to take to the printer.

Some months move faster, some far slower. There are issues that have 10 or more hours in production. Usually, the newsletter is a tight schedule, as we plan to have it in your hands (locally) a few days ahead of the actual meeting date. Of course, that is not always accomplished, but the ratio over the last number of years is far more on time performance than late.

Now I make a drive to the print shop. With that, a different timetable comes into play. It usually takes 5-7 working days at the printer. It is planned to get the issue to the printer and give them about 7 or more working days to print. Invariably, someone comes up with a last minute thing that just has to go in the issue, simply calling me or in passing mentioning it and expect me put it in. Frequently, this input comes after everything is collected and printed but before the disc has been delivered to the printer. Back to the PDF process and maybe ever redo the disc. With deadline looming or even late, I have to drop things, rush it to the printer. Upon rare occasion, we have even pulled an issue from the print shop to include a vital notice or news.

I ask the print shop to have the issue ready Thursday (or even sooner) one week before the meeting, depending on its size. They should call F.M. Hite when done, who then makes a special trip to the printer, pick it up, take it home, assemble, and fold, label and organize it. If the issue has many pages (like the December issue) it takes longer to get the issue assembled.

F.M. calculates his time as follows:

About 45 minutes to drive to get them and get back home.

About 2 hours to stuff them (with just 1 insert page). If there are two insert pages, you can add an hour.

About 2 hours to fold them. If there are two pages of inserts, add another hour as it takes longer to fold them.

About 2 hours to put the dots on and the address labels and get them in the right post office containers. Right now, our mailing requires the use of 4 containers. (one for all mixed zip codes, one for all 240's, one for all 241's, and one for all 243's).

Then, about 1 1/2 hours to drive to the post office bulk mailing unit, get them processed, drive by the Link Museum with extras and drop them off, and then drive back home.

Both of those trips must be planned for normal business hours, and allow a couple of days for the post office handling. At this point, we have easily 35 man hours into newsletter production. Pretty amazing isn't it? Also remember that does not include the times for our writers or getting the mailing labels printed. So the next time you feel like complaining about the Turntable Times being late or having mistakes, ask yourself, how many hours are YOU willing to spend on this project that goes on every single month? The staff awaits your efforts. I feel like a vote of thanks should be given to those folks; Kenney, F.M. and our regular contributors.

Passenger Train Update - January 2006

By Gary Ballard

As we come away from the holidays and get underway for a new year ahead, plenty of holiday cheer was found along the rails as 2005 came to a close.

A most festive and best ever Christmas story unfolded along the tracks leading into Philadelphia, on December 3rd. Bennett Levin, native Philly guy and best known for his two beautifully restored E-8 locomotives

in ex-Pennsylvania Railroad livery, put together a rare passenger train. It seems that Bennett and Vivian Levin were taken by the radio reports of the injured American troops that all of us hear about so much. They thought something should be done to honor them, and to let them know everyone cares.

The two Philadelphians organized a train trip to bring the soldiers from Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Hospital to the annual Army-Navy football game in Philly on Dec. 3rd. The idea materialized after much coordination of private car owners and big corporate sponsors providing gifts. The name for the train was The Liberty Limited.

The soldiers received first-class treatment. Bringing up the rear markers of the special train was the elegant Pennsylvania; one of three restored private cars owned by Levin. The car carried President Kennedy to the same games in 1961 and '62. It also carried his brother Bobby's body to Washington for burial in the late 60s. Bennett noted there's much history in that car. Throughout the 18 car train was mahogany paneling, plush seating and white linen dining areas.

Levin laid out some ground rules for the treatment of the passengers to insure that they would get premium attention: No press on the train, lest the soldiers are answering questions all day long. No politicians either, as to not make the train a platform for whatever they stand for. And no Pentagon suits on board. Levin didn't want the soldiers to be saluting people all day, for this day they earned already. All conditions were met.

The ground work resembled preparations that the Roanoke Chapter did in getting one of those multi-day Independence Limiteds ready during the NS steam program. Aside from Levin's three private cars, he recruited 15 other premium cars for the trip. Amtrak volunteered to transport the cars to Washington, where the Special was assembled, onward to Philly, and then back to

their owners. Conrail offered to service the train in Philly. And SEPTA bus drivers transported the wounded soldiers to the game.

Gifts poured in as well: Wal-Mart gave digital cameras. Woolwich gave away stadium blankets. Field glasses came from Nikon, while down jackets came from GEAR. To top it off, the War College ponied up 100 seats at the 50 yard line, and a hospitality suite. A smile came from the announcement that all the sponsors agreed to do this without fanfare or publicity. Now came the hard, and emotional aspect of this outing.

Levin had to be sure he could act properly in front of the honored guests. Those who know him say Bennett is an emotional guy. As every bit of planning came together, he knew there would be some difficult sights to bear once the trip took place. Some soldiers had lost limbs; others had someone pushing them in a wheelchair. The trip was a success, in spite of Army's loss to Navy.

Returning to Washington there was yet a second gourmet meal on the train for the heroes. A test to anyone's tears came when 11 Marines hugged the Levins, and then sang the Marine Hymn on the track platform at Washington's Union Station. In the weeks following, cards of thank you's have come in for the Levins for spreading a little holiday cheer.

According to Triple-A, more Americans traveled over the holidays and spent more to get to where they had to go. If you ventured more than 50 miles to visit grandma, you joined some 63.5 million other people as well. Gas was higher as we know, and in Washington state the price for regular gasoline was \$2.16 on Dec. 20th. The surprising number from all the data so far, is the number of those who drove compared to those who flew or took the train. In the West, approx. 81percent decided to drive during the holiday. Lodging for those weary motorists rose by 14 percent in December. We wonder if Tom Boedet for Motel 6, left

the light on for them.

Amtrak Cascades service (Seattle-Portland) is always a sell out during Christmas time. Back to the Thanksgiving holiday, Amtrak was busy as usual with MARC Commuter service providing extra cars for Amtrak on the Washington to New York runs. An operation that can affect Amtrak trains is the running of New Jersey Transit trains. On time performance numbers for NJT along the famed Northeast Corridor were bad for November with only 78.7 percent, versus 91.3 percent one year ago for this date. So when NJT local trains go slow or run delayed, it hampers Amtrak travel as well. Amtrak's on time performance along the NEC in November reportedly is 80.6 percent.

New Yorkers are breathing easier as this goes to print. The MTA subway and bus personnel went on strike during the last week before Christmas came. This was a bust for downtown merchants with sales for the city down by the millions each day. The crucial element in the strike is the workers pension plan. Plans to cut into the kitty, known as the pension plan, did not go well. Workers were going to have to contribute more into the pension plan, right when the company wanted to put more of their hands into it. This was a flat rejection by the rank and file. On the second day of the strike, New Yorkers walked to and from work again. For several miles they walked. For us Roanokers, try to imagine you would walk from the Roanoke Civic Center to the Taste Freeze in Blue Ridge, VA! That's one sure big hike. At Penn Station where the subways and commuters meet, there was no subway at this crossroad of life. Crowds gathered anyway as they always do. Deep below street level, the Long Island Railroad continued to operate carrying 50,000 more passengers each day. Amtrak employees on their lunch break had to carry a printed pass to get through the lines of people to reenter the building. A crowd of ten people wide and up to two city

blocks long waited for Metro North trains. On the good side of the strike, there were no related crimes unless you read the police report of a woman and a taxi driver getting into an altercation over misunderstanding of the cab fare that was due. Overall, the strike that crippled the way to work for seven million people is now over.

From holiday meals to a sandwich built for you. Recently, a test program ended on the Amtrak Empire Corridor. This is the line where trains travel between New York City and Albany. The passenger carrier tried an experiment with those who make Subway sandwiches. A few select Empire trains café cars had Subway personnel on board providing the food and beverages.

Amtrak management says this was a cost cutting measure. Already in the past year, Amtrak café car attendants based in Albany were told that their jobs would be cut. Passengers would therefore have no food or drink along this route. The word has it among the employees, that Subway ended the test period, stating Subway said this turned out to be something other than what was anticipated. The jury is still out on this one.

A positive note coming from oh' Canada. VIA Rail is said to be pleased to announce that it has concluded a tentative agreement with the Teamster Canada Rail Conference that represents over 350 locomotive engineers, thus avoiding a strike that could have begun on December 24th. The company was taking steps to aid passengers in the advent of a shutdown, but as of this writing it was hopeful that a strike would be avoided.

Further, details are forthcoming from the union, but its great news for rail travelers in the land of the red maple leaf. VIA trains provide passenger service across the country on behalf of the Government of Canada. Serving more than 450 communities from coast to coast, the mission of VIA is something our American lawmakers should read .

VIA's goal is to provide Canadians with a safe, efficient (key word here) and environmentally responsible passenger service. Read that again, please. It doesn't say treat the passenger train as though it were a wild animal, and to cut off all its limbs before it's put out of it's misery.

Rounding out the holiday cheer of trains, at the box office there was another viewing of *The Polar Express*. This was the second year for the computer generated film, this time it was seen in theaters offering patrons to watch it in 3-D. By wearing special glasses, the film appears to come right out to your seat in the movie house. *The Polar Express* is a film taken from a famous story in book form, and made into a movie starring Tom Hanks playing several characters. Tom was also the executive producer for the film. Railfans will recognize the locomotive; Pere Marquette 2-8-4 Berkshire No. 1225. The engine actually exists in Michigan and was one of the steam engines that came under steam at the 1991 NRHS Convention in Huntington, WV. The 1225 along with Nickle Plate Berkshire No. 765 double headed a 24 car train through the New River Gorge during that convention which also included trips behind N&W class A, No. 1218.

Chapter Mini-Outing

by Brian Crosier

Join us on January 28 for a mini outing. At 9:30 am we will depart from the Link Museum for a look at some of the historical old rail lines in or near the valley. Advance reservations are required. On this day we will head west to Salem then follow the remaining portion of the Hanging Rock branch. Next we follow the abandoned portion to McAfees Gap. On to New Castle at the terminus of the C&O's Craig Valley Branch. Locomotives once were turned on the above ground turntable where a VDOT building is presently located. The old right of way is quite visible as it passes through

farmland and schoolyards and over 120+ year old lattice truss bridges.

We will stop for lunch at the Pine Top restaurant and then continue along the right of way visiting some of the locations of revenue such as the old Fenwick Mines. We'll see little communities such as Oriskany and Barbour's Creek, once booming mine towns. See bridges that were built in the 1890's and then moved to the branch line in the early 1900s while the line was being upgraded for heavier traffic.

At the terminus is part of the original track (some rail still present) leading around part of the original wye at what was once the town of Bessemer. Bessemer was the connection with the mainline with Clifton Forge to the west and Lynchburg to the east. A separate track ran from the branch to the station at Eagle Mountain (now Eagle Rock). The line was dismantled in 1961, and now the right of way is owned by the state and parts have been converted to small roads. We will be able to drive on about one-third of the original 26.5 miles and visit at least five of the 17 bridges.

Once in Eagle Rock we will follow the CSXT (Chesapeake and Ohio) James River line to Buchanan and then the N&W south into Roanoke. Please contact Brian Crosier at 989-0361 if you are interested in this day trip priced at only \$18 per person. More information will be available at the membership meeting. Seating is limited.

Turntable Times

by Ken Miller

Effective with the March issue, the Turntable Times will become a bi-monthly publication. Due to the ever rising costs of printing and mailing, we have been losing money on every member's dues for several years now. We hated to make this decision, but economics force us to do so. The dues increase this year was strictly through the National organization, we did not get an additional penny from this, and felt that an

even larger increase in dues would chase some members away.

While it is possible that we may return to a monthly schedule for the Turntable Times, it will have to be due to demand or a need to pass information. You can see the effort involved in a single publication in the article elsewhere in this issue. If we have some news that is timely, it may well be published in the documents section of the website, which is intended to undergo some major changes in the coming months, don't worry, we will supply you with that information as it becomes available.

For those without internet access, we apologize, but suggest access can be had at most any public library. Once we get a new website up and running with more storage space, it is anticipated that back issues of Turntable Times may well be posted for your reading pleasure.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

Regular Meeting Locations are at the O. Winston Link Museum.

January 19 - Regular Meeting

January 28 - Mini Outing see inside

February 7 - Board Meeting

February 16 - Regular Meeting

February 18 - RESCHEDULED Holiday Gathering, 6:30 PM at the Church

March 7 - Board Meeting

March 16 - Regular Meeting

April 4 - Board Meeting

Please check the website (below) for last minute updates about meetings regarding cancellations, relocations or other details.

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

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