



Turntable TIMES

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

Volume 39, Number 2
March-April 2007



Friends of the Virginian Railway at Milepost 2007

Altavista, Virginia

April 13-15, 2007



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Turntable Times is published bimonthly 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 15, 2007 at 7:30 pm. at the Link Museum located in the former N&W Passenger Station, 101 Shenandoah Avenue.

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

Program will be the later half of the movie presented by Joe Fagan- Denver and Rio Grande.

Next month will be Old Steam Locos and Trains of the South by JMJ productions, DVD remastering of footage of six lines in Dixie. About 25% is the Virginia Blue Ridge in color, the rest is B&W of the L&N, R.F.&P, Southern, Seaboard Air Line and the Atlantic Coast Line. Mixture of quality from poor to great but very rare footage of VBR 0-6-0s, Governer class 4-8-4s and pacing a 2-8-8-2.

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 May/June 2007 issue of Turntable Times is Wednesday April 18, 2007. 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

What a sight it must have been to see the brand new Virginian Class AG 2-6-6-6 posed for the company photographer at Lima Ohio. Not to even mention the beauty of one running east on a coal train from Roanoke. The AGs were assigned to the Norfolk Division of the Virginian, but met their fate after the merger with N&W. Lima Locomotive Works Photo

Mixed Freight—March/April

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

In my last Mixed Freight I reported that the Buckingham Branch Railroad was supposed to take over its own dispatching duties on December 21st of last year. CSX Transportation was not ready. The Buckingham Branch was not ready. The new start date was March 1st. By the time you read this, only time will tell. Business on the BB is doing well. Sure they have their problems, but what railroad doesn't?

Many years ago there was a magazine in existence known as Passenger Train Journal. It is back now as a quarterly publication. I personally have not seen it at a magazine stand or a hobby shop. You can subscribe to it for \$29.95 per year from White River Productions @ 24362 Anchor Avenue in Bucklin, Missouri 64631. Call toll-free and use the plastic at 1-877-787-2467.

2006 was another banner year for freight traffic on America's railroads. Carloads were up 1.2% That may not seem like much, but it translates to 213,751 over 2005. Intermodal loadings were up too at an even 5% over 2005. That translates to 588,709 containers and trailers. Coal carloads rose by 4.7% at 324,476. That's a lotta 100 car unit trains. That black "dirt" accounted for 42% of all non intermodal cargo.

While freight traffic increased in 2006, membership within the National Railway Historical Society has declined to 88% of what it was in 2005. By the same token, 26 chapters reported membership increases.

The RF&P Railroad Historical Society continues to grow. As of mid February, we have just crested the 300 member mark. For an organization that really got rollin' in January 2005 that is an achievement to be proud of.

One year ago, I presented a two section Fond Memories entitled Those Seaboard

Coast Line Days. Believe it or not, July 1st of this year will mark 40 years since the Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard Air Line Railroads joined couplers on July 1st, 1967. That union required years to consummate. As a tribute to that merger, the ACL & SAL Historical Society will hold what will be billed as the ACL & SAL HS 2007 Richmond Conference. It will be a three and a half day affair beginning on Thursday night June 28th and end on Sunday July 1st. Activities are still in the planning stage. For more information contact ACL & SAL HS Richmond Meeting 2007, c/o Ned Krack, 614 Bristol Village Drive # 207, Midlothian, VA 23114, email nedrdgfan@msn.com You do not have to be a member of the SAL ACL HS to participate.

One thing I enjoy presenting within my Mixed Freight column is bringing up milestones of significant events. Most are pleasant. Some are not. This past January 4th marked the 20th Anniversary of one of the worst train disasters in the history of this nation. On that day around 1:30 p.m., north-bound Amtrak train # 94 The Colonial slammed into the rear of three Conrail light B36-7 diesels that had been operated past a stop and stay signal at Gunpow interlocking on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor. The Conrail engineer upon realizing what he had done, brought his light trio to a stop and was about to attempt returning to the siding when 94 hit him at an estimated 128 mph. At that time it was the worst disaster in Amtrak's short lived history. 16 passengers and railroaders were killed and 175 injured. It was a Sunday and as I watched the news that evening, the disaster got to me personally since I had railfanned the Gunpow Interlocking years prior. That disaster gave Amtrak more incentive for not having freight traffic on its NEC and the FRA incentive for requiring locomotive engineers to

have a license to operate locomotives.

If you are interested in more details of this wreck, TRAINS magazine for April 1987 has full coverage.

Small Rails

by Dave Meashey

I regret that I have not posted anything for some time. I really did not have any news. The garden railway club held its last few meetings for 2006 at layouts that had been covered already in 2006. Then the cooler weather set in and our meetings ceased.

I helped out at The Rail Yard during weekends for the Christmas season again this year. It is always enjoyable to see what is new in the toy and model railroad product lines. This year there were several manufacturers offering HO locomotives with sound. Even more HO manufactures are offering HO locomotives that are DCC (Digital Command Control) ready. These locomotives need only be programmed with an address code to operate on anybody's DCC layout. Most DCC ready locomotives have a default address code so they can be demonstrated at the store.

There is a multitude of fine cars and structures now offered in N, HO, and O scales. A somewhat disturbing trend, for me at least, is that so many cars and structures are now being offered assembled, when once they were offered as kits. Apparently "shaking the box" (Athearn & Roundhouse kits) has become too much of an effort in the 21st century. My eyes really rolled when I saw Plasticville O&S scale structures sold as built-up structures. Heck, when I was a kid, if I tripped while carrying a Plasticville building kit and dropped it – the thing assembled itself on its way to the floor! It just seems to me that the "pull it out of

box" crowd are missing out on a lot of fun, and not learning some valuable skills.

The traditional O gauge trains are still a popular gift, but they now have the enhancement of digital sound. The store offered a Lionel set called the New York Central Flyer for under \$250.00 this past holiday season. I did not have to try to sell this train. All I had to do was run the demonstration set on the store's layout, and the train sold itself. The train even features radio chatter in the neutral setting. Blow the whistle while the train is in the neutral setting, and the crew talks with the dispatcher. It's a bit far fetched for the prototype, but the PRR had cab radios in steam locomotives in the 1950s. I witnessed cab radios in the Strasburg Railroad steam locomotives in 1970, so younger children would not realize there was a time before steam locomotives had cab radios. Besides, its fun!

Another interesting product line was Bachmann's OO scale Thomas the Tank Engine trains which run on HO gauge track. Since Bachmann Branchlines of England already manufactures English outline trains in OO scale for HO gauge track, it's not too big of a stretch to add faces and the appropriate liveries to the models already represented in the story books. This is a great way to introduce the child who has outgrown the wooden trains to model railroad-ing.

The Legacy of Bill Sours

The late Bill Sours was one of the finest modelers who belonged to the Big Lick Big Train Operators. Bill's cars were not unique, but his construction methods were. Bill used the car plans from Ted Stinson, as published in Garden Railways magazine over the years. But, Bill also purchased scrap redwood from Hodges Lumber, cut the redwood into scale lumber, and built the car bodies board-by-board. Bill's cars were a delight to

behold.

When Bill died over two years ago, the other members of our club feared the cars would be sold at junk prices to a second-hand specialist, or, worse, destroyed. This past fall Bill's daughter asked the club president if our members would help appraise the cars and Bill's other model railroad equipment. In return, the membership would get first choice at purchasing items from Bill's collection. Several of us who knew Bill are grateful to have this opportunity to own one or more examples of Bill's wonderful craftsmanship.

New Dinner Train in Virginia

A new dinner train is scheduled to begin operating this spring in eastern Virginia. The Bay Coast Railway will begin operating from Cape Charles to destinations such as Machipongo and Exmore (with shorter excursions to Cheriton and Eastville.

The Bay Coast Railway is providing service with passenger and dining cars known as interurban cars. The interior of the passenger cars will be finished with mahogany with hardwood doors, window sash and tongue & groove floors. Each passenger car will seat 42 people with reversible type seats. The dining cars will feature carpeted floors, and windows with vintage treatments to match the interior decor. Dining car seating will be wooden chairs with seat cushions. Dining will be provided with a complete set of vintage style service, with seating configurations to accommodate either two or four patrons.

Restoration of the cars is being managed by The Edwards Railcar Company. (From Bay Creek Railway and Club Resort via Interchange, newsletter of the Baltimore Chapter, NRHS).

Harpers Ferry Station

MARC commuters who have been forced to wait outside for their trains at Harpers Ferry can now wait inside the newly refurbished depot. The station has undergone a major renovation project that began in mid 2005. According to National Park Superintendent Don Campbell, the Park Service also plans to create an exhibit on the history of the B&O Station at Harpers Ferry and dedicate a portion of the facility for community use. The station was built in 1894. (Excerpted from Martinsburg Journal via Potomac Rail News, Potomac Chapter, NRHS).

Beckley Exhibition Mine to Get Facelift

The Beckley Exhibition Coal Mine complex will undergo a \$3.5 million expansion and renovations to better tell the story of coal mining and miners in southern West Virginia. This will be the largest improvement project in the 45-year history of the Exhibition Coal Mine. A press conference announcing the project was scheduled for Friday, January 26th in the church building at the Exhibition Coal Mine at 315 Ewart Avenue in Beckley.

The centerpiece of the project will be a new visitor center and interpretive center designed as a coal camp and company store. The 14,000 square foot facility will replicate the look and function of a company store and highlight the mine complex's extensive collection of coal camp artifacts, memorabilia, and records. The project, slated to begin in spring 2007, includes new vehicle and pedestrian areas, better visitor access from the interstate (I-64/I-77) and outdoor exhibits illustrating coal mining's role in the

development of the region.

To facilitate renovations as quickly as possible, the coal mine will close until the spring of 2008. Other destinations at the mine complex including the Youth Museum, Mountain Homestead, and camping facilities at New River Park will remain open during renovation and construction.

The Exhibition Coal Mine is the largest and most popular coal heritage destination in the area. Each year more than 50,000 visitors tour the collection of relocated coal camp structures including houses, a school, church, and mine superintendent's house, and go underground through an actual coal mine guided by former coal miners. (From Gondola Gazette, newsletter of Collis P. Huntington Railroad History Society, Inc.)

Passenger Train Update— February 2007

by Gary Ballard

As we begin a new year, we'll discuss three items taking place with Amtrak. There are plenty of changes going on with the long haul dining car menus. Four of the company's top officials get a pink slip, and the new Congress is putting up more money for the trains.

At first, when I heard the term "simplified dining service," I was worried. Fearing the worse, but learning that things are not so bad. The company is looking for ways to maintain food service in dining cars and reduce costs as well. After all, new legislation from Capitol Hill, mandates that Amtrak's dining car and sleeping car service costs cannot come out of the yearly budget as approved by the feds.

Everyone who rides Amtrak long distance trains, loves to start the day with a hearty breakfast. There are more choices for the customer. The chef still prepares omelets by

cracking three eggs and adding the correct flavor items depending on the type of omelet on the menu. You can order Bob Evans scrambled eggs with French Toast on the same plate. In previous years, the passenger had to choose one or the other, but not both. The Continental will see less fresh fruit, only because the fruit selections from the vendor have been poor quality in the past. Currently, the plate offers cold cereal, a banana, croissant, and yogurt.

Gone are the familiar three meal periods. A selection of items will be available all day. This allows revenue to be made in the car all day long. During the middle of the day, there will be hot items found on the old lunch menu. Lunch will still being offered, and appetizers will be heated up during the hours from lunch to dinner. The all day menu offers buffalo wings, baked potato skins, cheese sticks as well as the traditional sandwiches usually found during the lunch period. This allows a passenger to eat light perhaps after lunch and not have to wait to order something heavy during dinner. This could result in lighter table reservations for dinner; something the reduced waiter staff will find welcoming.

The evening meal will find the return of the strip steak. As with all dinner entrees, the passenger will have a choice of two starches and two vegetables. Salads and dinner rolls accompany the entrees. Pork, chicken, meatloaf, and vegetarian lasagna will make for a smaller dinner selection, but the all day menu items will be offered during the same time as well. Ice cream was once a dessert item found on only a few long haul routes. Now there is Baskin-Robins ice cream in little cup containers. Cheesecake and sweet temptation chocolate are on the menu to finish the evening.

Now to the management scene at Amtrak that gets constant press from industry maga-

zines and northeast newspapers. The company took on a new CEO last fall. Mr. Alex Kummant, age 45, takes over the spot once held by David Hughes who replaced David Gunn.

It's no bit of rocket science to understand why the hamper wheel revolves so swiftly at the Amtrak CEO table. David Gunn was axed because he refused to dismantle Amtrak fast enough as per hateful wishes of the Bush appointed Amtrak Board of Directors. So David Hughes came in and was told where the door was after he turned out to be too liberal for the Board. Though it was Hughes that brought on those horrible labor demands for Amtrak's unions to deal with, they didn't materialize. And so the Board looked on.

Amtrak's Board of Directors looked for someone who did not have any experience in commuter operations, nor urban transit history. In fact, the search for a new CEO was handed over to the firm of Heidrick & Struggles. The search had no success. Several top airline men were sought for the job, but refused when they looked at a company that has to fight for funding from an unfriendly White House.

On to the hunt for a new CEO for Amtrak and add the names of Conrail President Ronald Batory and former New Jersey Transit chairman John Haley. Those capable men never made it past the interview stage with Amtrak personnel although the Heidrick & Struggles keen eyes gave positive marks regarding the two men. The Amtrak Board was looking for someone with no experience in operating an urban rail system. Such a man is Alexander Kummant.

Kummant's resume includes top management positions at Union Pacific, with Emerson Electric, a large construction equipment builder named Komatsu, and BOMAG which builds industrial equipment based in

Germany. Though he has held important high profile jobs, it's been seven jobs in 8 years, for those counting.

Kummant has received boosts from railroad executives like John Snow, the former CSX chairman, former treasury secretary, and President Bush cheerleader, as well high marks from Matt Rose, BNSF chairman and Bush fundraiser along with Union Pacific chairman and Bush fundraiser Dick Davidson.

The Kummant sword got its first executive order when the new CEO fired four top officials at Amtrak on Friday, Dec. 15, 2006. Gone are chief financial officer David Smith, Amtrak police chief Alfred Broadment, out is Vice-president for marketing and sales Barbara Richardson and head of corporate communications William Schulz.

This shake up was reported by the UTU Union newsletter. Also out is Alicia Serfaty, the company's general counsel and corporate secretary. All those fired would not respond to calls asking about the massive and surprise shake up.

As this news went to press at the New York Times, it was learned that Amtrak's inspector general reported that the company's legal department had mismanaged contracts with outside lawyers.

As it seems, Amtrak's new CEO sits proudly with many Bush supporters. A new Democratic controlled Congress will make Bush's plans to kill Amtrak very interesting. A new bill before law makers call for up to \$17 billion in federal funding for the next six years. Capitol for right of way upkeep is needed, after many years of deferred maintenance. Amtrak's Conductor and Engineer's union have gone without a contract and pay raise since before the year 2000.

This could be the year to watch as Amtrak faces a determined leader and a changing of the control of Congress. Stay tuned.

Friends of the Virginian at Milepost 2007

Once again this year, the Friends of the Virginian Railway will come together on Friday, April 13 through Sunday, April 15.

The Friends of the Virginian at Milepost 2007 will be another outstanding opportunity to visit the line and learn more about its operation. Meeting at Altavista, we will experience the railroad's Norfolk Division.

Some new activities will be offered this year, as well as keeping the very successful from last year. You can get more details at: <http://vgnry43.googlepages.com/virginianryat-milepost2007>

or send a SSAE No. 10 to: Skip Salmon, 3721 Buckingham Drive, Roanoke, VA 24018-2448. Once again this year, the event is a fund raiser for the Virginian Station Project in Roanoke.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

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

March 15 - Regular Meeting

April 3 - Board Meeting

April 19 - General Meeting

May 1 - Board Meeting

May 5-6 - Chapter Outing - Details at the March and April Meetings!

May 17 - General Meeting

June 5 - Board Meeting

June 21 - General Meeting

July 3 - Board Meeting

July 19 - General Meeting

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

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