



Turntable TIMES

Volume 33, Number 8

August 2001

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





Turntable TIMES

**Volume 33, Number 8
August 2001**

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MIXED FREIGHT

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SMALL RAILS

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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 general meeting on Thursday, August 16, 2001 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 August program will be "Independence Limited International" by Carl Jensen. This program was postponed from early in the year, but is now back on the schedule and will be excellent!

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 Saturday, August 18, 2001. Please send articles, information and all exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

Material For Turntable Times

We are always in need of articles, photos or news items for the Turntable Times. Due to copyright restrictions, we cannot reprint articles from many newspapers; a condensed or rewritten article crediting the source is acceptable.

Cover Photo

RS-11 No. 342 leads EMD units on an eastbound time freight passing under the Virginian's massive bridge at Glyn Lyn, Virginia during a hot July day in 1959. In only a few months the N&W diesels will soon be running on that bridge as well. Norfolk and Western Photo/K.L. Miller Collection

Mixed Freight - August

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

A few months ago, I reported that Norfolk Southern had plans to trim 12,000 freight cars from its fleet in an effort to cut cost and to bring the company more in line with current rail freight transportation needs. Just as members of the steel wheel fleet are being subtracted from Norfolk Southern ownership, 1,000 rubber tired vehicles are also on a like agenda. NS 21 is a study within the company to improve customer service and reduce cost and thus pinpointed the 12,000 cars and 1,000 vehicles such as sedans, large trucks and even some school buses. NS estimates it will save up to \$10 million annually because of the vehicle reduction and more efficient policies governing the use of the remaining fleet.

During the latter part of the year 2000, the Blue Ridge Live Steamers decided not to have run weekends in conjunction with holiday weekends. Most members have families that would much rather spend holiday weekends participating in more traditional American activities such as family get togethers, hitting the beach, mountains or theme parks. This new policy has really worked in our behalf. We recently had a run weekend during July 13th, 14th, July 15th was mainly used as a pack it up and hit the road day. Our next weekend run will be August 24th thru 26th.

I recently reported that Operation Lifesaver had placed a billboard ad along Interstate 95 a few months back. The information issued by the billboard focused on the legalities of trespassing on railroad property within the state of Virginia. I mentioned that I had no idea how many regular

people are aware of Virginia's statute against trespassing on railroad property but most out of state railfans are very much aware of the relatively new law. During personal visits to Ashland and Doswell on different dates I've observed the following: Families, typical suburban types with their SUV or minivan will park nearby to observe the trains. Before a train arrives, the entire family, usually 3 to 5 members, will place coins on the railhead. A train arrives, flattens the coins, the family alights to the tracks to retrieve their coins. Usually, their search is unsuccessful and they will try again.

Municipal cops may pass by and do absolutely nothing. A few weeks ago while in Doswell, a family was so busy trying to find their flattened coins; they were totally unaware of the oncoming danger until I warned them. Even then, they departed the danger area reluctantly. What really bothers me with these situations is the fact that the areas are ideal locations for responsible railfans to enjoy their hobby without hassle. A death, serious injury or close call could quickly change that. For those that MUST know, the train getting dangerously close to the unsuspecting coin searchers was Amtrak train # 89, the southbound Palmetto.

The annual Great American Train Show will be pulling into Richmond the weekend of August 18th and 19th. The location will be The Richmond Raceway Complex formerly the Virginia State Fairgrounds at 600 East Laburnum Avenue. Hours of the event are from 11:00 am. til 5:00 pm. both days. Admission for attendees 12 and up is \$6.00. For further information phone 630-834-0652.

Small Rails

by Dave Meashey

The Roanoke Valley Model Engineers have completed the framework for a new portable layout. It will allow the club to participate in train shows. Presently the club is holding a track plan contest to determine how track for the new layout will be structured.

The Big Lick Big Train Operators held their July meeting at my home, on Saturday, July 14th. Everyone had a good time, and homemade ice cream was served as part of the refreshments. The gang must have enjoyed the gathering, as it did not break up until about 5:30 p.m.

No one brought anything to run, so my MOW train had the layout to itself. Despite some track settling, the heavy Dunkirk logging locomotive could handle the grades at a brisk pace. My wife and I hope to build a new garden railway closer to our house in a few years, so I have decided to invest minimal effort into grade easements on the present layout.

A new grade crossing shanty and gates were on display at this meeting, as well as a new mine. The crossing shanty was a kit. The mine was a scratchbuilt and kitbashed structure. The mine shaft entrance was scratchbuilt from wood. Mine buggy track was kitbashed from HO gauge code 100 flex track by removing about every other tie from the track. The ore bin was kitbashed from my old Bachmann O&S scale Plasticville locomotive coaling tower. This structure is 40+ years old. Now it has a new life on the garden railroad.

Book Review

by John Austen

Short Lines: A Collection of Classic American Railroad Stories edited by Rob Johnson; 1996; St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY, 10010; 9-1/2" x 6-1/4", 244pp. + xi; \$23.95

This is a delightful sampling of the best railroad fiction ever written. It would be the perfect text for a survey course in the genre. Fiction allows the reader to savor the flavor of the times, in this case the golden age of railroading in America; these fourteen stories were originally published between 1897 and 1941. The book concludes with a few pages of Notes on the Authors.

Those already familiar with railroad fiction will meet some old friends here such as Eddie Sand in Harry Bedwell's Smart Boomer (after many appearances in Railroad magazine) and Epic Peters, the south's most famous Pullman porter, at least to readers of the Saturday Evening Post in the 1920's. You will also encounter some surprising echoes of other art forms, such as Rudyard Kipling's .007 published in 1898 (no, it's not about James Bond), in which the characters are personified locomotives: sort of an adult version of Thomas The Tank Engine and friends. And you may be surprised to learn, in Mrs. Union Station, published in 1901, that model railways were already a well established obsession. There are frustrating tales of disillusionment (The Octopus and The Far And The Near), as well as inspiring

tales of courage such as Frank Packard's *The Night Operator*. Jack London, Cy Warman, Frank Spearman and O. Henry are also represented here, among others.

Many of us enjoy fiction for its own sake. But it can also serve to flesh out the sometimes dry bones of historical narrative and statistics, placing things in context. It can also remind us of the primacy of railroads in people's lives a century ago, when the railroads were many things to many people: almost the only means of transportation; a major employer; really Big Business; the most modern High Tech glamour industry; etc.

Take a step back in time with this classic collection of railroad fiction. *Short Lines* is another fine offering from St. Martin's Press, whose authors have visited NRHS chapters before: Joseph Vranich (*Supertrains*) and James Porterfield (*Dining By Rail*) were featured speakers at Washington Chapter annual banquets, for example.

John Austen
Arlington VA

Just What is an L.S.A.?

by Gary Ballard

The three letters LSA, stand for Lead Service Attendant, Being an LSA means you are at the top when it comes to on board personnel. at Amtrak. All the eyes now come to you. Only one person gets to keep and record money coming in from sales on the train (outside the ticket fares the Conductor collects)... that's the LSA.

When a special train is operated, only LSA's are selected to crew it. On the Acela high speed train, only LSA qualified people can be part of the crew. In order to meet and greet the stars of Hollywood, and the important world figures that govern nations, who all, ride the Metroliners between Washington and New York City, you have to be promoted from coach attendant to LSA. On the long haul trains that Amtrak operates, the LSA becomes more important to the over all operation of the train and crew. This LSA either operates the dining-car or the lounge-car.

By the way, for those who do not know... the Amtrak' dining-car LSA now looks over much of the train, like the on-board Chief once did. The Chief position is being phased out this year. So the dinning-car LSA pretty much takes care of minor problems that are encountered along the trip, with the passengers and crew!

On long haul trips, the LSA makes the opening P.A. announcements to the passengers, as the train pulls out from the station He or she makes dinner calls. This LSA takes charge of the meal tickets and is solely responsible for the revenue brought in during meal. periods. The dining-car carries a tremendous amount of stock, all of the silverware, table linens and the food, which includes support items to prepare meals with... a job that the dining car LSA is responsible for. A job that offers higher pay as well!

My first days at Amtrak had my going from coach attendant, working my way up to the higher paying job of LSA in the dining-car. With this company for which I

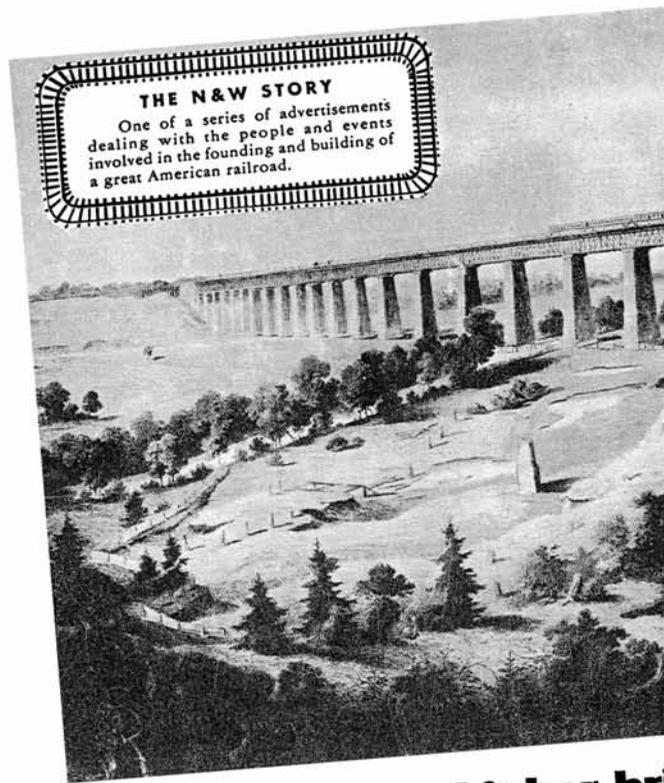
The N&W's Advertising Department produced advertisements for a wide variety of subjects over the years, it was not all just passenger trains and freight. Just two of the many samples are depicted here. From Robin Shavers collection comes a 1956 advertisement as part of a campaign on the history of N&W, this one featuring High Bridge. At the right from Ken Miller is one of the public service ads, not even mentioning the railroad! This one was produced in September, 1954 just in time for school. Unlike today when a stock photo would have been used, N&W photographers actually went out and set up the photo of the little girl and her mother.

An occasion column appearing in the Turntable Times.

**Historian
Kenneth L. Miller**

Any material of interest comments or corrections may be submitted to Roanoke Chapter NRHS Archives, attn Ken Miller, P. O. Box 13222, Roanoke, VA 24032.

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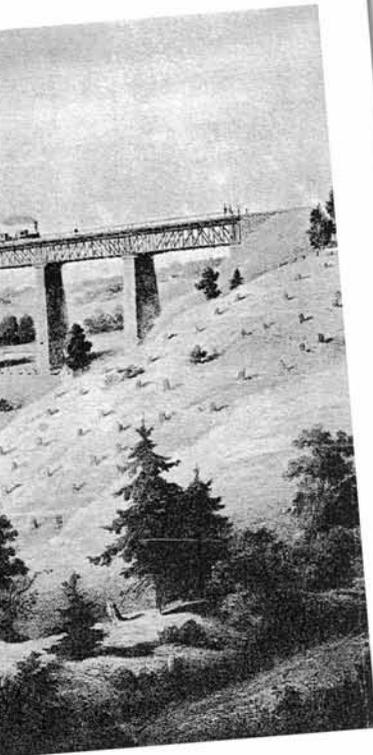
There have been higher bridges and longer bridges no

In 1851, construction of the South Side Rail Road (later to become a part of the Norfolk and Western) was halted at the Appomattox River near Farmville, Va. There the ground sloped gradually then dropped into a chasm where the river flowed. To bridge the narrow stream would require a span more than a half-mile long.

Most of the engineers said it would be wiser to detour than try to put rails across the gorge, but Chief Engineer W. O. Sanford insisted that a safe bridge could be built economically. He constructed piers of brick, molded of mud obtained along the river bank, and used wood

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Bridges not so long not so high . . .

of iron for the superstructure. The
 stand, over 100 years later.
 bridge varied in height from 60 feet at
 its base to 100 feet over the river and was
 not so long. According to Engineer Sanford,
 it had "been higher bridges not so long and
 bridges not so high, but taking the height
 together, this is perhaps the largest
 in the world."
 "High Bridge" served its owners long and
 and in a sense is a monument to the "get-
 e" spirit which has always characterized
 &W's efforts to provide the best in equip-
 and service.

rk Railway

Is it Really Goodbye ?

This little girl may never see her mother again.

She could be your child.

Or you could be behind the wheel of the car that snaps the thread of her life, or scars and maims and pains her until the end of her days.

It's not pleasant to think about it—but it IS time to think about it.

Every morning, millions of freshly-scrubbed little girls and boys set out for school—memory work done, written work ready to hand in, some with an apple for teacher and none with a care in the world. And every evening, some of them fail to come home. They've said their last goodbye to "Mommie."

Last year, 2,550 school children under 14 were killed between home and school and the National Safety Council estimates that approximately 150,000 others were

injured. Legally, in many cases, it was "their fault." This doesn't make the tragedy any less. And besides, when children are hurt, it's never really "their fault." Children aren't accountable for the grim things in life. They're made for laughter and fun and love.

Every person who drives a car should think about this. Drive carefully, for in a careless moment, you may take away a small life . . . break a mother's and father's heart . . . and break your own heart, too.



work, the proving ground for one to get through, is the position of dining-car LSA. To get to the fast trains of the Northeast Corridor, you have to become dining-car LSA first! Being LSA on the long haul trains is somewhere like being in charge of a fine cruise-ship and noisy kindergarten room. There is never a dull or quiet moment. After six months of being dinning-car LSA (you could also be lounge-car LSA) and displaying the obvious fact that you're still alive and that you have pulled all your hair out.. you are given the chance to bid on trains of the "corridor" as we simply call it. Now, I reminded myself of those Norfolk Southern "Independence Limited" we all used to do. . with 24 cars, 900 passengers and changing over the passenger load every two stops!!! I then realized that a nine car train and 300 people could be doable.

The dinning-car is the Mecca for excitement on a long distance train, to say the least. The LSA must report many hours, before the train departs the station. And he or she must count many items before the chef lights up the stove.

The Capitol Limited, train no.29 west-bound (it's #30, going east) departs Washington D.C every day at 4:05pm. The dinning-car LSA reports for work at 10:30am! My trip in from my Cedar home in Crownsville, MD begins at 9:00am, giving myself plenty of time for the 25 mile journey. (don't laugh unless you've driven in traffic in our lovely nation's capitol).

I report to the Ivy City engine facility. My arrival is 9:35 am, no problems on the road, although my car radio never left the 15-AM spot on the dial for WTOP news radio. The

station gives traffic reports on the "eights" of every hour. Today's journey to work was spotless. I drag along with me; my suitcase on wheels which is loaded with clothes and job related tools for three days. In the wintertime, I carry along my Amtrak dark-blue parka coat in case Murphy's Law thinks it's okay for me to stand along the tracks in the middle of the night in Toledo.

Upstairs I go in the personnel building which are also the busy confines of our commissary people. It's in this building I get all the information regarding today's trip. I am briefed on sleeper car loadings and any special handling needs of any of our guests. I then load a large plastic bag of signs that say "no smoking" or "restroom out of order." I also put in the bag, some coloring books that may be an eye opening treat for a small child that comes my way in the dinning-car. (sometimes a coloring book hushes up a loud child in heartbeat). With all my belongings in order, my other crew members stroll in. It's 10:50am, all is well.

My next job 'of preparing for today's trip takes me downstairs to very cold climate. I have to go into the giant food locker and count the food items that are used on the train. The food locker is kept close to 34 degrees, this keeps the milk, beef, pork, eggs, noodles and beer within FDA regulated temperatures. This also is what turns my lips bluer and freezes up my ball point pen. The LSA suit that I wear is going to have to keep me warm, it's May, and my warm parka is at home.

Once the food is counted and any missing items are given-tome by a commissary

worker; it's out to clerk's office to sign over the paper work. Any bad counting of food items on my part, and if I give back the paper work reflecting a bad or wrong count, could result in me paying back the difference to Amtrak. The form that has all the food printed on it, is called the "896 Form." And the 896 is at least eight pages long. The Chef is with me, he was going over the food as well, making sure he was given all the spices and other support items he'll need. Some chefs cook the instant way; others make meals from scratch. We are carrying some extra spices today because our chef cooks from scratch, the evening meal tastes good already! Everything looks okay on paper, so I sign over the 896. It's a few minutes to 12 noon.

The Amtrak van is about to show up and take us to the train at 12:30pm. Our train is parked in the Ivy City yard not an impossible walk by any means, but since I will walk plenty on my big Superliner home away from home, I opt for the van to take me to the train. Other crew members gather for the van as well. One of waiters assigned to the dining-car is a dear friend of mine that I made while we were classmates in our initial hiring class. He's a rail fan, his name is Fletcher, and I told him I worked on the Norfolk Southern steam program. His face lit up! He said he recalls seeing my picture in a magazine concerning one of those trips. We become instant buddies, talking about trains whenever we were assigned the same train. Both of us never bothered by any racial background, I became Fletcher's little Caucasian rail fan

friend. As he first notices that I'm the dining-car LSA, he says "Oh boy! We're gonna have a fun trip today!"

Minutes later, we pile ourselves and our luggage into the van, and sometimes what is piled in, is not actually small. down the side of the yard we go. We pass the pocket track that has three AEM-7 electric locomotives waiting to be serviced. The little engines get their windshields washed, and sand tanks refilled here; Our train sits on a track that is near the Acela service building. Our train is nine cars long. The van stops along side the crew-dorm, "transition-sleeper" car. This is where the crew sleeps during those few hours we'll get to do so. We haul ourselves and luggage up to the top floor of the car, and make our way to our rooms. On some trips and with crews, the same person picks the same room. On the lower level, is an area with tables to be used by the Conductor and his assistant conductor. Bathrooms and shower stalls are also downstairs. Sometimes the crew is nice enough to not take the bigger handicapped accessible room downstairs. Today the crew's generosity is extended. I am given the first choice for the bigger room. I take it! It's almost 1pm.

The real work begins in getting this train ready for 250 guests. Sleeping car attendants go to their respective cars and start the job of operating a hotel on wheels. They have to wait for the linen truck to show up and deliver the sheets and blankets that will make 44 beds for travelers. Coffee makers must be cleaned and fired up to make the brew that gives off a warm aroma that will make its way through out

the entire car. The attendant also prepares a wicker basket of mints and chocolate cookies, to be left out next to the coffee maker.

The much talked about dining-car staff goes to their location of duty... a cold car. The dining-car is a cold car when it is empty of the things it needs to be operational. The crew will now make it operational. Downstairs, the chef and his two assistants will handle the food as it's being unloaded from the commissary truck. The chef must do this quickly so the cool temperature of the food doesn't change to a dangerously warm level. The FDA says 40 degrees and up to 140 degrees is the danger zone (bacteria grows best in this range) the food is loaded fast without missing a beat, as usual. One floor above this busy pace, the waiters are bringing up on the food elevators or dumb-waiters, the supplies they'll need for the trip, salad dressing, butter, jelly, napkins and glassware. The tables are dressed with real tablecloths, not the brown paper that was used back in the 80's. Place mats and silver ware are laid out. Today's first meal will be the evening diners As for me, the lovely dining-car LSA, I assist the two waiters in what they're doing. I also have to prepare my work station, which will include an electronic calculator with a paper roll-out ticket. This ticket will be my proof in court, if my end of trip figures mismatch those of Amtrak's remit office. This is the deciding factor on whether you're given a debit,

The LSA makes test announcements over the P.A. system at this time. Respective car attendants will answer back if the system

is working in their car. Now is the time to find out if there is a car with no working P.A.! All is well today everybody answering.

Coach attendants are busy setting headrest covers on the backs of seats. They check the restrooms and trash bins, All is okay. Our train really is ready, as made that way by our right and ready crew in the Ivy City yard. We have no big hangups to hinder this train today.

Back in the dining-car, I go over the passenger manifest with my crew, this briefing usually includes the entire crew. We have 65 people in sleeper accommodations. That's about one and half cars The two waiters plan accordingly. The remainder of the passenger list is in coach. The dining-car will be divided off into two sections, one for each accommodation we have. My buddy Fletcher is taking the coach side on this trip. That's okay, he prefers it to be that way. He does not know nor do we that in Indiana at 8am, we'll get 20 Amish folk boarding in the morning. They are quiet people by nature, but as I have found out, are very nice to deal with. Some actually tip! They're going to Chicago to shop!

It is 2:30pm. A big jerk is given to the train. We are backing down to the station. Our train has two GE Genesis locomotives on the head end. A local yard crew and its little switch engine is performing the chore of backing the Capitol Limited down to the many tracks of Union Station. Our usual place to board passengers, is the lower level of tracks. We come to stop on track 23, the mail cars are added to our last coach. After this is done, our train's rear portion is in the tunnel that takes the

tracks under the U.S. Capitol, and onward to points in Virginia. The attendants from each car step out onto the platform and wait for the moment our guests will come down the escalator, and to their respective cars. The chef opens his door to the Lower-level of the dining-car. He smiles, his kitchen is ready. His steam bins are ready to place corn, carrots and mashed potatoes in. His two assistants are preparing fresh garden salads; a touch of red grapes is added to each salad. The lounge-car LSA is almost ready, she has all her "sodas" ready, the ice is ready and all of her snacks are out and ready for purchase. And I'm ready, too! All we need now is for this silver double decker train to be on time!

It's 3:42 pm, we leave at 4:05pm. Chicago tomorrow morning!

Coming Soon!

The Boomer

CSX will operate an office car special that is due to pass Eagle Rock at 10:42 AM on the 16th of this month. Upon arrival at White Sulphur Springs around one o'clock the passenger extra will split into two sections with one heading to Huntington at 2 that afternoon followed by the other heading to Ashland KY at 3. The two consists will be consolidated at Russell Yard that PM before returning to Jacksonville over the Clinchfield.

Apparently the Ashland section is for the ladies who will transfer to Motor Coach at the Ashland Amtrak Station for a shopping tour????

Chapter Outing, Part 2

by Jim Overholser

On Monday, September 24, 2001, the Mountain State Railroad and Logging Historical Association and the Cass Scenic Railroad State Park will operate an excursion from Cass, WV, to the old ghost town of Spruce, and then on the former Western Maryland track now operated by the West Virginia Central.

Leaving at 10 AM, the special geared steam train will operate to the "Big Cut" at over 4000 feet elevation and down Shaver's Fork of the Cheat River to Twin Bridges and is scheduled to return to Cass at about 5 PM.

Jim Overholser has agreed to coordinate a special chapter outing for this trip. By ordering our tickets as a group we will save \$5 per person.

Tickets include a box lunch with a hot entree and are \$40 per person. We will car pool to Cass early on the morning of September 24 and return that night or, alternatively, you can make your own arrangements for lodging and driving if you want to go up the day before.

Sign up at the August Chapter meeting or contact Jim Overholser (343-1928). We need at least ten people for the group rate. Make your checks (for \$40 per person) payable to the Roanoke Chapter NRHS.

Condolences

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Membership Chairperson Lawanda Ely on the loss of her mother on August 4th.

Right at press time we received word that Dorothy Kelch had passed away on August 9th. We will have more next month.

Turntable Times

In the May issue of Turntable Times, Kenney Kirkman had an article regarding the future direction and format of this newsletter.

He asked for input from the readers, to date we have only had two or three responses from this article, we know there must be more interest in this subject than has been shown, we urge you to submit your opinion, either in writing or via email:

Please forward your comments to either Kenney Kirkman at his Collinsville, Virginia address listed within Turntable Times or to Kenney at kkirkman50@hotmail.com Or you may contact Ken Miller at: KMiller611@aol.com Or you may contact Kenney Kirkman or Ken Miller in care of the Chapter P.O. Box if you wish.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

August 16, 2001
General Meeting

September 4, 2001
Board Meeting, 7:30 pm

September 20, 2001
General Meeting

September 24, 2001
Cass Outing

October 2, 2001
Board Meeting

October 18, 2001
General Meeting

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