



# *Turntable* TIMES

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

**Volume 37, Number 7**  
**July 2005**





# 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, July 21, 2005 at 7:30 pm. Our meeting location will be at the Link Museum located in the former N&W Passenger Station, 101 Shenandoah Avenue. Please enter on the lower level at trackside, our meetings are held in the theatre/auditorium downstairs.

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

Our program this month will be a slide show from Dorr Tucker about the early days of the Chapter, it is bound to be a good one, following the excellent presentation by Rick-2 Johnson last month!

## *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 Monday, July 18, 2005. Please send articles, information and exchange newsletters to: Kenney Kirkman, Editor, Turntable Times, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, Va. 24078-2128.

### **Material for Turntable Times**

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

For those interested, a PDF of the Turntable Times is posted on the website when the issue goes to the printer, at least ten days before seeing it in the mail, check the website for last minute announcements as well. This issue was posted on July 1st.

### **Cover Photo**

In the news of late was the new FRA ruling about blowing for grade crossings, obviously this sign no longer applies. It had been posted at the Salem City limits for many years, when this photo was made about 1976. Interesting wording however, since the mainline "whistle" disappeared from day to day use by mid 1959 and the airhorns were common. K. L. Miller Photo

## **Railday 2005**

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The Blue Ridge Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society would like to announce the 27th Annual Rail Day, Saturday, August 6, 2005 from 10am – 4pm. This model train show is always well attended by veteran modelers as well as newcomers to our hobby. It definitely has a family atmosphere. Children are always admitted at no charge when accompanied by a paying adult. Model layouts with operating trains are a real attraction for everyone young and old. Our Chapter also operates the onsite concession stand with freshly prepared lunch items at very affordable prices. We are holding the event in the same location as last year's event. It will be held at the Forest Recreation Center just off US 221 in Forest, Virginia (approximately 10 miles west of Lynchburg, Virginia). There will be an ample amount of signs directing vendors and the public to the Forest Recreation Center on the day of the show. Plenty of free parking is available. Vendors can easily unload their goods next to the building.

## **Mixed Freight - July**

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by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

Mark your calendars for Saturday August 6th for the annual RAIL DAY event sponsored by the Blue Ridge Chapter NRHS in Lynchburg. The actual event will occur at The Forest Recreation Center in Forest, VA. The time will be from 9:00 a.m. til 4:00 p.m. This year we will emphasize railroading as a hobby both prototype and modeling. The photography contest will be back as well as modeling and hopefully more operating layouts.

As I have done for almost 20 years I spent Memorial Day weekend up in Altoona. This

always includes a sidetrip to Cumberland, Maryland on my way up. Arriving around 1:30 a.m. Friday May 27th, CSX didn't get busy til shortly after 4:00 a.m. which was a first. Normally trains are polishing the tracks all night long.

I had contacted the Western Maryland Scenic Wednesday for train departure times for Friday and was elated to hear steam would be on the business end for an 11:30 a.m. departure. A chilly night evolved into a T shirt comfortable morning by 7:30. My roundtrip to Frostburg and back to Cumberland was great. Ironically, a merchant whom I purchased a souvenir from turned out be the wife of the head of the hiking and biking interest. She too wants the WMSR to continue to operate. She said an indepth 90 day study was in progress to hopefully come up with a solution to keep the WMSR in operation for at least five more years. This 90 day study was also mentioned in the June issue of Trains. One more thing in the railroad's favor is more and more people at the grassroots level contacting the governor and other officials to voice their desire to keep the trains running.

That Friday I rode, the engineer's high school class of 1950 something reserved an entire car for themselves and they were really excited about a former classmate from a long time ago operating a machine that was quite common during their high school years. That was one happy engineer.

Moving northward to Altoona, Norfolk Southern moved a lot of tonnage over The Alleghenies during my 3 day stay. Of course I cannot visit Altoona without rain, 2 out of 3 days. Only 2 pairs of Conrail dress blue pusher sets remain. The balance are pure Norfolk Southern and a few CR/NS combos. Due to increased business, three more trains each way, have been added since last fall. Six years after Conrail was divided between

CSX and NS, it was great to still see a few trains being powered by pure Conrail lashups.

The vegetation reduction project at Horseshoe Curve continues with noticeable progress. According to a volunteer I chatted with, Norfolk Southern has been quite amiable. Their main concern was erosion at The Curve. Plant roots and general vegetation clutter at the ground level is not to be removed.

Over the past two years or so, a coalition of railfan business proprietors in cooperation with other business people west of Horseshoe Curve have been promoting a theme known as Allegheny Mountain Magic. The former PRR high iron form Gallitizin @ MP 248.1 to Summerhill @ MP 263.9 is the focus of A.M.M. This is a good stretch of railroad from a railfan perspective. With this in mind, an eight page brochure was created listing places where fans can legally enjoy railfanning between the two mile-posts. Area restaurants, lodgings, pubs, museums, automotive service facilities and a host of other businesses are included in the brochure. If you are interested in having a copy of the brochure call 814-886-8871 or log onto [www.gallitizin.info](http://www.gallitizin.info)

On May 16 of this year, the Federal Railroad Administration announced a new initiative known as the National Rail Safety Action Plan. The plan is geared to address railroad accidents attributed to human error, improve safety procedures for handling hazmat cargo, minimize the dangers of crew fatigue, implement the latest technological advances to detect track defects and to focus inspectors on safety trouble spots.

I'm gonna bring this Mixed Freight to an end with something that used to bring up the end of mixed freights and other freights as well many years ago. That something is the cabooses. Have you ever given thought as

to how that car that once brought up the rear of freight trains got that name? Originally a cabooses was a little house found on the deck of Dutch sailing ships where meals were prepared. Like other nationalities, the Dutch had a healthy presence in the population of early America. When Dutch railroad workers would see the little car on the rear of freight trains, it reminded them of the little house on the ships that brought them to America. The term just caught on. The cars are also known as crummys, hacks and on the Pennsy as cabin cars.

Oh yeah, it was a pleasant surprise to see the Roanoke Chapter's former N&W T6 parked in the Western Maryland Scenic Railway's depot sidetrack.

## **Passenger Train Update June 2005**

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by Gary Ballard

This month we'll take a look at what's being introduced at Amtrak, instead of reporting on the usual beating that the carrier is getting from Capitol Hill. There are some bright changes to know about.

Anyone who has a warm spot for those little RDC cars that the Budd Company produced back in the 1950s, will be glad to know that these cars are can be seen hauling passengers in Duluth, Minn. Although it may not be Amtrak service, local officials began commuter service in Duluth. Promoters hope to show motorists the train is a good alternative to autos. The 25 minute trip began as a bargain with tickets at just \$1. The trains began operations last month.

The RDC will be remembered as being a self propelled coach with Budd's fluted side design. The power plant was two GMC diesel bus motors mounted under the floor. A drive shaft provided power to the wheels. The huge cooling radiators were installed on

the roof, encased in a dome housing. Several variations to the original design were built. In more recent times, the cars were converted into unpowered coaches with the engines removed.

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Memorial Day is now behind us, and the official start of summer is here. On that historic day, Major League Baseball games stopped all play at 3pm local time. Amtrak train whistles were sounded across the nation. Many other organizations took time to mark the moment when we should remember those who have died in service to our country.

The observance was also witnessed at all VA Hospitals, Department of Defense, the Liberty Bell, the Statue of Liberty, Mount Rushmore and the International Space Station. Shoppers at Wal-Mart were given an announcement at 3pm that day. The crowds and drivers of NASCAR had taken a moment to reflect as well.

Many veteran railroaders in the Roanoke Valley can still remember how vital the N&W Railway was to World War II. Countless numbers of soldiers, sailors, ammunition and tanks traveled through Roanoke.

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Out west, many are taking notice of milestones being made in passenger train travel. According to The North County Times (CA), during the summer of 1971, Amtrak's first three months, just two trains a day ran between Los Angeles and San Diego. One train ran between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Things have changed.

Today, Amtrak operates 70 intercity trains and over 200 commuter trains daily in California with an annual ridership of 9.3 million. Amtrak employs 3,589 people in the state, paying \$154.9 million in wages. Every year the carrier buys supplies and services in California, putting \$30 million into the

state's economy.

As of May 31, the Pacific Surfliner passenger train, formally known as the San Diegan, celebrated its 5th birthday. The Pacific Surfliner travels 347 miles through 32 cities and six counties. Eleven daily roundtrips connect Los Angeles and San Diego. Ridership is hitting 9.8 million in just five years, the numbers are to hit 10 million by July of this year.

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Leaving Chicago, Amtrak's Empire Builder embarks on a scenic rail journey that takes passengers through tall mountains and beautiful glacier regions. The route follows closely portions of the old Lewis and Clark exploration route. The Roanoke Chapter's food counter car, "Devils Lake" once plied these rails. The trip ends up in Seattle, WA. A new marketing approach has come to this train. Amtrak has selected the train to be the prototype of its long distance trains in the future. The Builder celebrated 75 years of service last summer, and now crews are being introduced to enhanced service training to make this historic train a premier leisure-travel train.

From Conductors to Dining Car attendants, all are being given new guidelines as to the first greeting a passenger receives, provide at seat meals, to properly hosting wine and cheese tasting events held for First class passengers.

Amtrak has finally realized the importance of a segment of the public who spend money to ride a train for the sheer enjoyment of taking a scenic trip. This fact is being acknowledged of those who live in the US and from overseas as well. Tour operators will be notified and special ski packages are being worked out.

The Builder's consist of Superliner equipment has been going through refurbishing. Consider planning a trip this year on the

Empire Builder, the scenery is awesome. The train travels during daylight from Minot, ND. all the way to Whitefish, MT. This gives you ample time to witness the beauty of Glacier National Park through the windows of your First class sleeping accommodations. Eastbound Empire Builder, train No. 8, leaves Seattle at just before 5pm and picks up a second section of cars from Portland, at Spokane, WA. Headed for Chicago, you'll be eating breakfast as the train rolls by the great Izaak Walton Inn built by the once mighty Great Northern RR. You arrive in the windy city, three days later, at 3:40pm.

The westbound counterpart, train No. 7, leaves Chicago after lunch in the big town at 2:51pm. You'll be sleeping through one of nature's cold spots, Fargo, ND and will have begun your breakfast of French toast, bacon and coffee by the time the train rolls through Devils Lake, ND at 6:25am. On the second morning, the train approaches Seattle from the North and stops at Boeing's hometown of Edmonds, with the final stop not too far from Seattle's waterfront at 10:20am.

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In New Haven, local officials are cooling down after reading a report concerning the current state of passenger train service in Connecticut. The eight page report said the state's years of neglect and low funding caused a near collapse of the railroad in January-February of 2004.

"We're not out of the woods yet" said Jim Cameron, Vice Chairman of the Connecticut Metro-North-Shore Line East Rail Commuter Council. The Governor's office is standing by to approve \$1.3 billion to be used to rehabilitate the line.

The council praised Gov. Rell for allowing the purchase of 342 cars over the next 10 years, at a price tag of \$667 million. A new

repair and maintenance shop is to be built in New Haven for \$300 million.

The blistering condemnation sounds of the annual report hit hard. One major cause of the lack of sufficient seats on the trains was the fact that 15 percent of car fleet is awaiting repairs. The state purchased 38 cars from Virginia, but only a few of these cars have been used because there are not enough serviceable locomotives to pull them.

The line will purchase 8 locomotives from Amtrak to alleviate the problem. Ridership has grown, commuters have flocked from the roads to the train, and the standee situation on the trains gets worse. In it's report, the council recommends building new support facilities before buying any new cars.

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Moving south to Providence, RI, those driving on I-95 can look over at the recent collection of Amtrak's Acela trainsets. The highspeed trains have been parked, just north of the railway station, because of brake problems. Other Acela trainsets have been sitting idle in Washington, Philadelphia and New York.

Amtrak mothballed it's entire 20 train fleet, after small cracks were discovered in the disc brakes in 317 of the fleet's 1,440 disc brake rotors. The cracks were detected on April 14th by Federal Railroad Administration safety specialist Rich Thomas. Tests were being done to see if the Acelas could have their speed limit raised in portions of the line in New Jersey.

Again, much of printed and broadcast media have reported almost daily on the problem in the Northeast part of the country. No cause for the cracks has been determined, so far. Three disc rotors are mounted onto the axle, for all the axles beneath the coaches. The discs are not solid, but rather look like a donut or ring around the axle.

Spokes hold the disc to the axle. Drawings in newspapers have shown the cracks to be in the spoke.

Amfleet equipped Metroliner trains are subbing for the Acela trains. The sidelining of the Acelas is costing Amtrak more than \$1 million weekly.

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Latest support for Amtrak by the public, as measured in a poll held by The Wall Street Journal. Poll taken on May 18th, 2005. The paper asked, what should the federal government do with Amtrak's funding? Over 5,925 took the on-line survey, and :

67% said to increase it.

21% said to cut all funding

8% said keep it about the same

4% said to give less this time

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And now to the Assistant Conductor who reached out and touched someone. As reported by The Richmond Times Dispatch, a man was beating on the side of Amtrak train No. 86 while a stop was being made at the tiny depot in Ashland, VA. Conductor Gerald Maxey heard the man yelling and banging on the door from the side of the train opposite of the station platform. Maxey said the man yelled, "I gotta catch a train."

The man was standing in the gauge of the adjacent track, and a CSX freight train was barreling down that track. Maxey knew something terrible was about to unfold. Amtrak engineer Clinton Hues watched the drama grow worse from his vantage point on his locomotive. The approaching CSX train kept blowing it's horn at the would be passenger standing on the tracks.

Quickly Maxey told his Assistant Conductor who was standing near, to open the door. Michael Agee, a new hire on Amtrak, was about to get the memory of a lifetime. Agee opened the coach side door

and looked down at elderly man loaded with luggage. He'd gotten himself on the wrong side of the train. A look up the line, and Agee could see that the CSX freight train was fast approaching.

Maxey yelled, "Come here, come over here!" But the man seemed oblivious to his danger. By now, the CSX engineer was frantically blowing his horn, the 35 mph heavy train was just seconds away.

What Maxey did next was not covered in any of his Amtrak training manuals. He dropped to his knees and leaned down outward to the old man. A lucky grab with just fingers allowed Maxey's other hand to get a firm grip on the man.

"I grabbed his jacket by both shoulders and pulled him toward me." said Maxey. The Conductor had leaned over pulled on one the man's arms, Agee grabbing the other arm. He was clear!

Three feet away from the man's feet, the CSX train went by. Both the Assistant Conductor and the not-so-wise old man lay next to each other in the vestibule of train No. 86. Only after the death defying event did the man realize what had just transpired. On the headend of No. 86 engineer Hues said a few religious words to himself.

It took a few minutes for everyone including watching passengers to get their emotions back in check. The elderly man who just escaped death, said he just wanted to buy a ticket. Conductor Maxey, 60, was so spent from the ordeal that he left it to Agee to sell the man a ticket. The train continued it's northward trek to Alexandria and Washington, DC.

Though both Maxey and Agee went about their work day as if all was forgotten, engineer Hues thought their bravery should be recognized. He sent an account of the incident to the United Transportation Union. The train and engineman's newspaper ran a

story in May praising both conductor's actions.

As for the old man, he went about his journey that fateful day. Perhaps he'll turn around the next time he hears a loud horn.

### **Almost Like Old Times**

Saturday, June 25 seemed a little like the Sold days for a number of Roanoke Chapter members as the first Railroad Festival in many years was held at the Link Museum. The hot weather, sounds of steam whistles and lots of old friends around reminded one of the days of Independence Limiteds.

Chapter members were responsible for concession sales during the day and seemed to do quite well, no crush of people in the 1148 these days, but with the outside heat, it was a bit like the a/c had failed! Our thanks to all who participated. And join us next year for a bigger and better show!

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS**

### **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

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

July 21 - Regular Meeting

August 2 - Board Meeting

August 6 - Railday 2005, Lynchburg  
Blue Ridge Chapter NRHS

August 18 - General Meeting

September 6 - Board Meeting

September 15 - General Meeting

October 4 - Board Meeting

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

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