



Turntable
TIMES

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

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March 2001





Turntable TIMES

**Volume 33, Number 3
March 2001**

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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, March 15, 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 program will be a video tape provided by Joe Austin featuring the 1979 NRHS Convention in Washington DC, with old friend 4501 as well as some surprises. The program is about 45 minutes long and should be quite enjoyable

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, March 19, 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

Railfan's Weekend at Historic Spencer Shops as shown in this early morning view by Mr. Robin Shavers.

Annual Banquet

by Bill Arnold

The Chapter's Annual Banquet will be held Saturday, March 31st, 2001 at the Hotel Roanoke. The member's cost is \$23.00 per person (this rate includes a spouse or significant other). The non-member price will be announced later. A cash bar will be available from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The meal will begin at 7:30 p.m. The meal will be buffet style in the room. The menu appeared in the January issue.

Our special guest speaker will be John Hildebrand, author of "Iron Horses in the Valley" the story of the coming of the railroads to Shenandoah Valley and western Virginia focusing on the Valley Railroad.

PLEASE REMEMBER! It is now Chapter policy that if you make a reservation for the Annual Banquet or any other Chapter event that has a cost to it, you are obligated to pay the Chapter for your ticket(s) whether you actually can attend or not.

Please call Bill Arnold (389-3217) or Jim Overholser (343-1928) for reservations and to arrange payment.

Proposed May 5-6 Amtrak Excursions Refused by Norfolk Southern

by Paul Howell and Ken Miller

We received word on March 1st that Norfolk Southern has refused to allow the operation of an Roanoke Chapter, Amtrak excursion train on the weekend of May 5-6 as reported in the past two newsletters. Norfolk Southern offered no reason for their refusal, and we hope to try

again in the future.

In addition to our trips, the Watauga Valley Chapter NRHS trips were scheduled to operate the same trainset the weekend prior to our operation has also been refused by CSX.

Meeting Cancellation Policy

The meeting will be considered cancelled if any of the following conditions are met: 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 the meeting.

Mixed Freight - March

by Mr. Robin R. Shavers

Last month I reported that Union Pacific Railroad plans to trim it's workforce. Of the 2000 people it wants to relieve itself of, 1800 are to be offered early retirement. Also of that 2000 total, 1200 were part of 5200 to be laid off as a result of the 1996 merger with Southern Pacific.

People are not the only resources being let go by Norfolk Southern. 12,000 or more freight cars will be subtracted from the company's property too. 3,000 to 4,000 duplicate or underutilized track miles will be sold or abandoned in the next 2 years. That will reduce NS's total route miles by 10%. At least 10 underutilized or redundant yards, shops or production facilities are to be consolidated or terminated.

I don't know whether this will be a fallen flag or one to be lowered on the mast. Canadian National recently confirmed a deal to acquire Wisconsin Central Limited for \$800 million.

Many of you may recall a few years back

when I presented an article I wrote entitled "WHAT THE HECK IS A YADKIN?" It was about a group of railfans in Tidewater Virginia that get together once a month to view slides, have duplicate slides ordered, eat and generally have an enjoyable time from about 7:00 p.m. til midnight. For a little over a year now, The Blue Ridge Chapter NRHS has been having a "FUN SHOW" on the 4th Wednesday night of the month. The Fun Show takes place at the same establishment as their monthly business meetings, the banquet room of the Piccadilly Cafeteria located at River Ridge Mall in Lynchburg, VA. People assemble about 6:30 p.m. for dinner and socializing. Slide presentations are presented from 7:30 til about 9:30. People bring as many or as few or no slides at all. It goes without saying that slides should be brought. I remember back in October that if I had not brought my 80 slides, the evening for the most part would have been a waste of time since only a few folks brought only a few slides. Any railroad related material is welcome from the glory days to the Acela Era. If you wish to attend, I suggest you call first to make sure a Fun Show will occur. The contact people are E. Norris Deyerle, Jr. at 804-237-4912 (H) 804-385-6226 (W) or Rick Johnson 804-239-6159.

For several years now, I have been letting you readers know of the activities and happenings with The Blue Ridge Live Steamers. What I haven't done is inform you that you individuals are welcome to join B.R.L.S. if you are so inclined. One thing I want to stress is this. You do not have to own or even plan to own any live steam locomotives or rolling stock. If you just enjoy

being around and lending a helping hand to those who do at our weekend events, that will suffice. You can join as an associate member for \$25.00 annual dues. But whether you join as a full member with your own trains or as an associate with good ole enthusiasm for trains I suggest that you first spend some time at one of our weekend events for a few hours if not for an entire day. Get a feel for what the group is about and not about. Of course there is more to the BRLS than running the trains. There is always property support chores to be performed, track maintenance and expansion projects. One more important point. If you do not own or plan to purchase your own equipment, members whom do are more than happy to instruct you on running their equipment if you have proven that you can be trusted with expensive and potentially dangerous equipment. We also actively participate with other live steamer groups around the country. For more information write to us at: Blue Ridge Live Steamers, Post Office Box 12774, Roanoke, VA. 24028.

NRHS Railway History Bulletin Board

Do you enjoy sharing your knowledge of railway history with others? Do you have a railway history question you need an answer to? Would you like to find a great place on the Internet to post or read current events about railways and history? If you answered yes to any of these questions, the NRHS Web Site now has a new feature perfect for you! In early November the NRHS web site launched the Railway History Bulletin board to provide a central-

ized form on the Internet for the easy exchange of railway history information. Check it out, today, at www.nrhs.com. No registration or login required! (From NRHS News Extra, Winter, 2000).

Accela-ent!

by Brian Crosier

During the week of Valentines Day, I was sent north for a doctor's appointment at UVA Medical center. I took the opportunity to head a little further north to visit friend and chapter member Gary Ballard at his new home in Crownsville, MD. I arrived in Crownsville Wednesday night and proceeded to Baltimore Washington International airport and train station to watch a few trains since Gary was not due in until around 1a.m. His Acela train would arrive at BWI at 11:19p.m. and I was hoping to get a shot of Gary in his uniform and a few shots of the train.

In the interim, my camera and I were kept busy as train after train came through from the Cardinal to mail expresses, new and old power pulling newly refurbished and repainted cars mixing with older equipment and paint styles. Mixed in with the Amtrak trains were the MARC commuter trains with there own mix of the Morrison Knudsen GP-40-2w with parts that date back to some of Amtrak's original SDP-40's of years gone by (the cabs and nose), mingled with hoods from old SD-45's on GP-40 chassis and hardware making an aesthetically pleasing and sharp unit especially when pulling the new Kawasaki single or Double deck commuter coaches. Not to be left out, Amtrak has many new things happening in the northeast includ-



Brian Crosier

Member Gary Ballard poses next to one of the new Acela units at Washington Union Station

ing new High Horsepower 8000hp units (HHP-8) which are double ended units that acted like they were at the horserace fresh from the gate starting out of a station stop. New paint schemes adorn Amfleet coaches, cafes, etc. symbolizing the new Acela express services. And if all this is not enough, we have the new Acela itself, a high speed trainset that consists of two 6000hp units fore and aft, surrounding six to ten cars with business class, cafes, and more. This train is a rolling computer from top to bottom, and it seems like every part of it is alive. Terminal hookups for you computers at each seat, and flip top tables for food, work or playing a game of cards

that you buy in the commissary. Colors that are pleasing to the eye and evoked a relaxed ride, of which is incredible.

The train pulled into the station right on time and pulled to a stop. The conductor gets off and asked me if I am Brian. After acknowledging, he said that Gary was in the next car down so I grabbed my camera bag and gear and stepped in hoping to get a quick shot before departure. I was about halfway through the car when I realized the train was moving. When I found Gary I explained that I did not have a ticket and he told me that it was ok

that I was getting my belated holiday gift. So I

kicked back in the café and was treated to a meal of grilled rib-eye steak with herb butter, with green asparagus, carrots, grilled red peppers, and red skinned mashed potatoes with artichokes. The ride on this train was as smooth as silk, no swaying or rocking was evident, motion itself was only detected by looking out the window and seeing the towns flash by at 130 mph. Wow. This really was a treat, I was riding Amtrak's newest, sleekest, fastest (at places on its Washington D.C. to Boston run the train travels at 150 mph) trainset. Today only five of the anticipated nineteen trainsets are in service.



Brian Crosier

One of the HHP-8 units speeds a Northeast Direct towards BWI station.

Arrival into DC came before I was even finished with my supper, but since Gary had to finish cleaning up the car I had time to finish before getting off to take a few more pictures. I had not previously noticed but for this trip I had been riding in none other than car number 3305. Heading up Union Stations platform we stopped at the engine, and I was invited to take a quick look inside the cab. With windshields that feel reminiscent of a Plymouth voyager providing an unbroken view of the track ahead, an inviting desk-top style control console and captains chairs the locomotive crew of this train

works in "luxury". The train was in track 22 at Union Station just a few away from the track that a GG-1 crashed through and entered the concourse to have the floor fall away under its immense weight allowing it to drop into the basement many years ago. Today, all the platforms are marked with electronic signs stating which train is where and where and when to board. Parked on our track ahead of us is Amtrak 10001, Amtrak's track inspection car made out of an Amfleet car now with a rear open platform. That must be fun in the higher speed ranges. On the next track is an old toaster (AEM-7) still in old paint. Next to it is a new HHP-8 and another AEM-7 in the newer northwest express paint scheme. Also in the station were Norfolk Southern Pullman Business car Marco Polo Still in full Pullman paint and NS diner the former William Mahone.

Well I stayed around for a few more days, and we watched some more trains and some airplanes and some light rail and some commuters and well you get the idea. At BWI the excitement continues around every corner, as there is always something to see.

Ninth Street News

by Brian Crosier

During the past few months, the weather has been quite cooperative and we have gotten quite a lot of track laid. As of the end of February, the main track replacing the original has been laid to within thirty feet of the end. Also, the switch is complete and we now have enough room to run our track carts around one another for different jobs. We received a donation

of an antique spike puller, which is being converted to carry a hammer for spiking purposes without modification so that it can also serve as a puller. With the sale of baggage car 277, the ex Chicago Great Western later Great Northern, the crew was busy finding space to store the material that had been inside of the car. A switching move was made with the GP-30, and the baggage car was placed next to the dock with the 538 adjacent to it on the new track. This was done so that the seat frames that were stored in the 277 could be carried directly into the 538 also we could have dock access into the baggage car for the other material that was within. After all was unloaded the equipment was moved back into positions that allow us to continue work on the track safely, and the baggage car was spotted on the track closest to the parking lot so that Mid America Rail could do whatever work is necessary for them to have the car moved. Work continues on laying track and will soon see weather warm enough for painting and other restoration work to resume on the GP-30 along with the other projects slated for this year. We can always use help. We need people that can do the footwork also. It saves much time to have someone to help bring supplies around or sweep or clean. If it is cold, we can have a fire in the coal stove on the caboose. The archive facility is also heated and needs volunteers. There is usually someone at the siding on weekends after 10:00 on Sat. or 12:00 on Sunday. The phone number to the siding is 427-5216, it rings six times and then the fax kicks in so if no one answers please try back as we sometimes cannot make it in

the first six rings. For further info contact Bill Mason, Brian Crosier, The Shermans, or Ken Miller.

Book Review

by Louis M. Newton

IRON HORSES IN THE VALLEY, The Valley and Shenandoah Railroads, 1866-1882, by John R. Hildebrand. Published by Burd Street Press, Shippensburg, PA.; The History Museum and Historical Society of Western Virginia, Roanoke, Va.; and The Salem Historical Society, Salem, Va. Softbound, 128 pages.

As its subtitle implies, **IRON HORSES IN THE VALLEY** is a history of the planning and construction of two competing railroads through the Valley of Virginia in the years following the Civil War. It covers the complex political and economic factors involved as well as the engineering and operational aspects.

The Shenandoah Valley RR, backed first by the Pennsylvania RR and later by the Clark banking interests of Philadelphia, succeeded in completing its line in 1881. The events leading up to the selection of the community of Big Lick from among several possibilities as its southern terminus and a connection with the Norfolk & Western are covered in some detail. That decision was an important factor in determining the site of the Roanoke Machine Works and the formation of the city of Roanoke.

The competing Valley RR, backed by the Baltimore & Ohio RR, was less successful in its efforts. Although General Robert E. Lee served briefly as its president in 1870, it was 1883 before the railroad was complet-

ed as far south as Lexington. Beyond that point, although some work was progressed, the line's backers were never able to carry out their plans to extend the line to Salem for a connection with the N&W.

The coverage of the unfinished 51-mile section between Lexington and Salem is of particular interest. The book's appendix contains detailed maps showing the proposed location of the line, along with color photographs of handsome stone-arch culverts and other structures in various stages of completion. These works are still visible at several locations south of Lexington and north of Salem. Built around 1873, they stand as monuments to those who planned and labored in their construction.

Author Hildebrand's 40-year career as a civil engineer is reflected in the high quality of the book. It has been carefully researched, as well as documented, and is arranged in a logical and orderly manner. It is obvious that the author is thoroughly acquainted with his subject, has studied it for many years, and is enthusiastic about it. **IRON HORSES IN THE VALLEY** will be a valuable addition to the libraries of those interested in the history of Virginia railroads and the people who planned and built them.

Reviewed by Louis M. Newton, February 5, 2001

Intermodal Transportation

by Ray Myers

This article is written to give the reader an overview of intermodal transportation which we railroad related people commonly understand to be Trailer on Flat Car (TOFC), or piggyback (truck trailers or con-

tainers on a rail flat car). The word INTER-MODAL was coined new about 25 years ago. It is not in my trusty dictionary, however in general meaning it is the movement of goods, animals or humans from origin to destination by more than one means, ie, train-truck, airplane-ship, or a combination thereof. It isn't new, we just did not have a name for it. For instance, many years ago packages were shipped by Railway Express, first by rail and then by truck for final delivery.

Early Use of Piggyback by Teams and Wagons

Let's go back in time. The Spaulding and Rogers circus first took to the rails in 1856. By 1872 the rail industry was moving wagons, cages, and other equipment via piggyback while utilizing teamsters and horses between the railhead and the show site. Currently Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey use two trains to move their two circus units, and The James E. Strates Shows carnival still moves their show by rail. The earliest known commercial use of piggyback was on Long Island, NY in 1885, when farm-laden wagons of produce were moved to market in Long Island City. Special boxcars were used for the horses while grooms and drivers were provided a coach on the otherwise piggyback train.

In North Dakota in 1918, there is record of the small Midland Continental Railroad transporting a commercial trailer. Then in 1926 the electric Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee interurban line started moving trailers into the Chicago loop. By 1931 the Lake Shore Electric Railway was piggybacking between Cleveland and Toledo with what they called "Railwagon", which was a

long flat car under three 18-foot long highway trailers.

Long Distance Piggyback Begins

Looking for ways to increase business in 1935, the Chicago Great Western Railroad borrowed a trailer from the Chicago-Dubuque Motor Transportation Company for the purpose of developing a set of blocks to secure trailers on a rail flat car. On July 7, 1936, this became the first railroad to offer piggyback service over a relatively long distance on a permanent basis, operating between the gateway cities of Chicago, Omaha, Minneapolis and Kansas City. In 1936 the freight rate was \$42.00 for a loaded trailer on the 172 mile Chicago-Dubuque run. Also, as a provision of the Motor Carrier Act of 1935, the ICC for the first time permitted joint truck-rail freight rates.

Containers labeled Flexi-Van by owner, New York Central Railroad came into use in 1958. Their use soon faded because loading and unloading was cumbersome, and very few railroads offered this type of service. The Rail-Van combination road-rail trailer was developed by the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway in 1958. They were used to haul mail on the rear of existing passenger trains in the Chicago, Grand Rapids, and Detroit areas. This too, was short lived since passenger trains were in rapid decline in that era (this was a forerunner of Norfolk Southern's Roadrillers and Amtrak's pulling trailers behind some trains beginning in 1998).

Inherent Problems with Intermodal Transportation

First, for many years the railroads would not admit that there was such a thing as a

truck. Secondly, the railroads did not know how to think like a trucker since they ran trains when they wanted to run trains whereas truckers ran trucks ran the shipper wanted to run trucks. Thirdly, piggybacking loses time in rail yards for trains classification while the trailer on the highway is rolling along at an average of 29 miles per hour between origin and destination.

For you readers in the Roanoke, Virginia area, following is a prime example of why piggybacking is not competitive in many locations. For many years the Eastman Company in Kingsport was shipping two or three trailer loads daily of acetate plastic granules in cardboard drums to their facility in Rochester, NY. About 1950 they tried piggybacking which was a disaster. When a trailer left Kingsport over the road between midnight and 6:00AM it arrived in Rochester the next morning for unloading. When a trailer was delivered to the Clinchfield on day one it arrived on the Southern in Johnson City the next day and on the Norfolk & Western at Bristol on the third day. Then with delays in rail yards in Roanoke, Hagerstown, Enola and other junctions the trailer would arrive in Rochester about a week after leaving Kingsport. It is understood that the shipper suggested coupling piggyback cars on the rear of passenger train No 42 leaving Bristol at 7:40 PM and behind passenger train No. 14 leaving Roanoke at 7:00 AM the next morning for Hagerstown. At that time this was too much for the railroad to fathom.

A serious ongoing problem is the delivery of trailers or containers to their final destination by truck when the trailers or containers re third party owned. Delivery is

contracted to owner-operators who are often stuck with fines associated with being overweight or not road worthy for safety reasons. Then too containers and trailers may get lost in out of the way places after being unloaded. Also many are stripped of any good tires that are on the chassis. These are but a few of the problems associated with Intermodal Transportation.

A New Era Arrives During the 1970's

During this time period this country, Canada, Mexico, the Pacific Rim countries and Western European countries got together and established standards for containers so all containers regardless of ownership would be compatible on rail, road or at sea. The standard size was fixed at 8 feet high, 8 feet wide and 20 feet long or 8 feet high, 8 feet wide and 40 feet long. The largest container ships (to large for the Panama Canal) can carry 2500 containers.

Beginning in the late 1960's the Pennsylvania Railroad and later Conrail had an efficient piggyback service primarily between New Jersey and Chicago which continues today. Single and double stack coast to coast container service got started in 1984 after APL (American President Lines - an ocean shipping company) prevailed on a reluctant Southern Pacific Railroad to handle its containers at the port of Los Angeles. Today it is big business between ports on the Pacific and ports on the Atlantic for all east-west railroads moving containers from and to Pacific Rim countries to Europe and Africa across the United States. This is referred to as a LAND BRIDGE. The north-south movement of containers and trailers has (and is) develop-

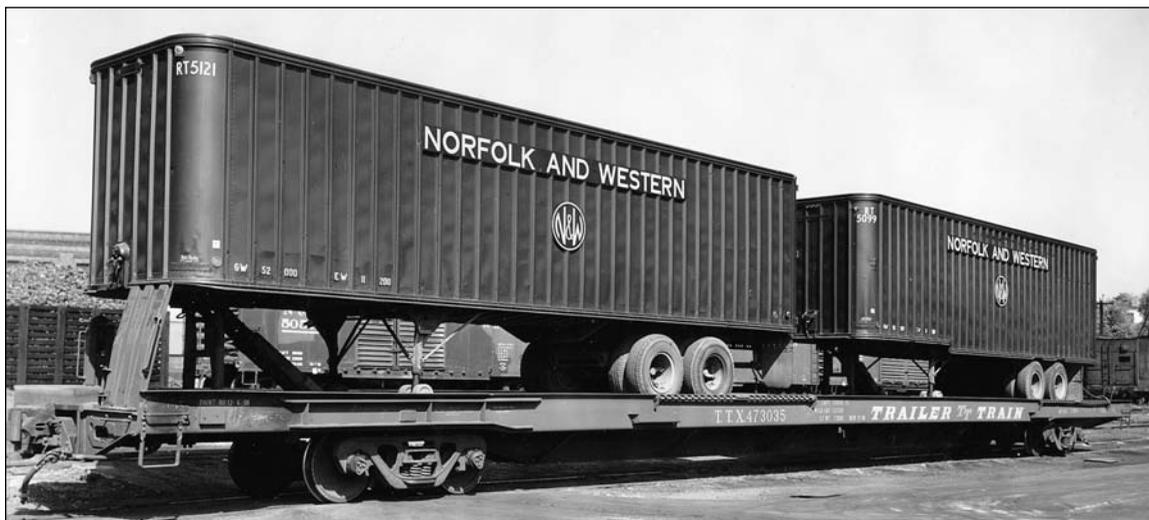
ing slowly for a number of reasons.

It is unknown how much this east-west LAND BRIDGE will expand. At present the Panama Railroad is being rebuilt to handle a projected increase in container traffic between the two oceans. The two largest truckload carriers (Schneider and J.B.Hunt committed heavily to piggybacking in the early 1990's but have since retracted to some extent because time sensitive freight was not arriving as scheduled. For time sensitive freight they have reverted to two man driver teams using sleeper cab trailers.

The Future for Intermodal Traffic

The only area of potential growth for the railroads is in Intermodal traffic. Coal fuels 50% of the nations power plants which is not expected to grow. Overseas sale of coal is down while less coal is required to stroke the steel mills due to overseas production of steel. Also, export grain shipments have declined. The intermodal busi-

ness now accounts for 17% of rail revenues, making it second only to coal which generates 23% of revenue. When CSX and NS went before the Surface Transportation Board, they "sold" their plan to buy Conrail by promising to take millions of tractor-trailers off major highways. It has not happened as people in the Roanoke Valley can attest by the truck traffic on Interstate 81. A large percentage of the truckers are individual owner-operators who are actually business men trying to make a living for themselves and their families and, are therefore, not beholden to any company or organization. Then you have the unionized motor carriers like Roadway Express, ABF and Consolidated Freightways whose union contract restricts piggybacking to 28% of the trailers each moves. However, there remains hope that this source of traffic will increase, at least until the "fat lady sings"...



N&W Photo

N&W's earliest trailers were an attractive sight but many worlds away from today's intermodal service.

Banquet Reminder

Please be sure to contact Bill Arnold (389-3217) or Jim Overholser (343-1928) to make your reservations for the Annual Banquet before the meeting. We will have some excellent food, fellowship and fun and a few special door prizes. **Our guest speaker will be John Hildebrand talking about his new book "Iron Horses in the Valley"** see review inside this issue.

We need News!

The Turntable Times is in dire need of a local reporter to give us a frequent run-down on operations, motive power and other current events in the Roanoke area. This is not difficult, contact Kenney Kirkman or Ken Miller for details.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

March 15, 2001
Regular Meeting, 7:30 pm

Annual Banquet, Hotel Roanoke
March 31, 2001

April 3, 2001
Board Meeting, 7:30 pm

April 19, 2001
General Meeting, 7:30 pm

May 1, 2001
Board Meeting, 7:30 pm

May 17, 2001
Regular Meeting, 7:30 pm

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. Items of interest should be sent to Editor Kenny Kirkman, 590 Murphy Road, Collinsville, VA 24078-2128.

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