



Turntable **TIMES**

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

Volume 50, Number 1
Jan.-Feb.-March 2018





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Jan-Feb-March 2018

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Turntable Times is published quarterly 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 or contributors of the Turntable Times and do 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 regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, March 15th. The meeting will be held in the auditorium at the O. Winston Link Museum at 7:30 pm. Please be sure to enter at the west end of the building on the track level.

Our April meeting will be held Thursday, April 19. Our May meeting will be Thursday May 17. Please be sure to check the cancellation policy below.

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 966-4809.

Deadline for Turntable Times

The deadline for the next issue of Turntable Times is Tuesday, May 8, 2018. Please send articles, information and exchange newsletters to: Editor Turntable Times, P.O. Box 13222, Roanoke, VA, 24032. All parties sending newsletters to the Roanoke Chapter via email should send them to Jim Overholser: jgoverholser@verizon.net, Dorr Tucker at joandorr@cox.net and Ken Miller at klmiller@rev.net

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.

Cover Photos

It was the blue era. Bob Simpson captured SD-45 No. 1723 running short hood first leading an assortment of other power on an extra coal train eastbound at Mill Lane in Salem on this snowy January 1970 day. The Roanoke Chapter (in its new incarnation) was barely two years old, when this photo was made. A lot has changed, here as well as elsewhere in the ensuing 48 years. Bob Simpson photo.

For current information on the FIRE UP 611! campaign,
see www.FireUp611.org

From the Editor

In 2018 Roanoke Chapter will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary year. In this and later issues we will be providing information on people and activities that have brought us to where we are now. If you were part of that "First Year" please let us know.

Congratulations to our newly elected Board members, Chuck Akers (President), Delta Helmer Pelgrim (Treasurer), and George Stein. The three retiring board members they are replacing, President Jeff Sanders, Treasurer Jim Cosby, and former Secretary Skip Salmon, have served for years and are to be congratulated on their accomplishments. See the report elsewhere on the Annual Meeting and Election held November 16, 2017.

If you haven't done so already be sure to send your renewal in for 2018. Delta Helmer Pelgrim has provided information on how to pay your Chapter and National dues in this issue in her Membership report.

The Chapter wants to sponsor a young camper (high school age) at a Rail Camp this coming summer. Please contact Carl Jensen for more information.

Norfolk and Western 611 is in Spencer, NC, for winter maintenance. We are hopeful for excursions in 2018 – but time will tell.

Jim

Holiday Gathering

Approximately 100 members and friends attended the annual Holiday Gathering at Roanoke's Calvary Baptist Church December 21, 2017. This was the largest crowd for the event in a number of years. Thank You to all who contributed their time and efforts. Bonnie Molinary and her helpers are especially to be thanked.

Condolences

We are saddened to announce the passing of a former Roanoke NRHS member and one of our Mechanical Chairman - Joe Gelmini on December 20, 2017.

Shirley Workman, twin sister of S. R. Winegard, passed away February 23 in Richmond. Our thoughts and prayers are with S R, Edith and family.

Sick List

Paul M. Howell is recovering after a fall at home and a hospital stay. We wish him a speedy recovery.

Judi Salmon had shoulder surgery recently. We wish her a speedy recovery.

Lawanda Ely has been in Roanoke Memorial Hospital recently. We wish her a speedy recovery. She went into cardiac arrest, was revived, and is on the road to recovery. She is very thankful to be alive.

The Timetable

May 17 – 19, 2018 – Joint or coordinated N&W Historical Society, Southern Railway Historical Association, and ACL – Seaboard Historical Society conventions, Spencer – Salisbury, NC. Information at www.nwhs.org and www.srha.net

August 7 – 12 – NRHS Annual Convention in Cumberland, MD. Planned activities include the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, Potomac Eagle excursion, steam on the Everett Railroad, and other activities. Former C&O steam engine 1309 will NOT be in operation by the time of the convention. Work on the rebuilding has stopped. www.nrhs.com

August 11, Saturday - Lynchburg Rail Day 2018. 40th year! Join our friends. www.blueridgenrhs.org

August 22- 26 - Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society's 49th Annual Conference,

Lynchburg, VA. The conference will be held at the Holiday Inn in Lynchburg, VA. www.cohs.org

Board of Directors

Our Chapter Board usually meets at 7 PM the first Tuesday of each month in the Chapter's Virginian Station. Members are welcome to attend.

At the November 16, 2017, Annual Meeting and election of the Chapter, five directors were up for election to two year terms. President Jeff Sanders, Treasurer Jim Cosby, and Director Skip Salmon had announced they were retiring from the board. We all owe them a big THANK YOU for their ability to get things done over the last several years, including restoring the Virginian Station and many other accomplishments including working with VMT on the 611 excursions. Choosing to run for reelection were Gary Gray and Carl Jensen.

The nominating committee headed by Gary Gray and Fred Boettner nominated Chuck Akers, Delta Helmer Pelgrim, and George Stein to fill the vacancies, and they agreed to serve. Nominations from the floor were solicited but none were received, and the slate of five directors was accepted by the members by a vote of acclamation. The new directors took office in December and the entire Board of Directors elected the officers for 2018.

2018 Directors and Officers:

- Chuck Akers, President
- Gary Gray, Vice President
- Lewis Foster, Secretary
- Delta Helmer Pelgrim, Treasurer
- Carl Jensen, National representative
- Fred Boettner, Director at Large
- Ken Miller, Director at Large
- George Stein, Director at Large
- Percy Wilkins, Director at Large

Emergency Notification Phone Numbers

You may use these phone numbers to report emergencies or other conditions affecting railroad operations, including trespassers, vandalism, fires, defective equipment, etc. If at a railroad/highway grade crossing try to provide the unique crossing number/DOT number posted nearby, usually on a small blue sign.

Norfolk Southern 800-453-2530
CSX 800-232-0144
Amtrak 800-331-0008

From the "New" President

Hi, I'm Chuck Akers, your new Roanoke Chapter, NRHS President. I've been a member since 1973 and come from three generations of railroading family. My grandfather was a conductor on the Radford Division for over fifty years. My father was a locomotive fireman, also on the Radford Division. My great uncle, James L. Akers, was the station agent at Rural Retreat, VA featured in O. Winston Link's famous night time shots there. I grew up within one-hundred-fifty yards of the Radford Division mainline, so it was only natural that I, too, would work for the railroad.

I hired out on the N&W as an extra board brakeman in the Roanoke terminal in 1976, just three weeks out of high school. During my time there, I also worked the "emergency" brakeman's board which sent me to Radford, Norfolk, and Shenandoah Divisions when the regular lists were depleted. In January 1977, I transferred to the Radford Division and began to work my way up to regular assigned brakeman on runs to Bluefield, WV and Bristol, TN. I was promoted to Conductor in 1979 and worked various assignments throughout the division.

In 1985, my longtime friend Chuck Jensen

and I purchased an ex-UP Auto Train dome coach, refurbished it, and ran it on the NS steam program for a year. It was later sold to a dinner train in St. Louis and then to the KCS Railway for their office car train where it still runs today. We then purchased and refurbished ex-Pullman, ex-NKP office car 7, "Kitchi Gammi Club," an 8 section, buffet, solarium lounge. The KGC ran in the NS steam program in 1994, was restored to Amtrak standards, and continues to run for private charter.

Also in 1985, I accepted promotion to locomotive engineer. The recent merger then, of the N&W and Southern railroads meant trainees were sent to the former Southern Railway's technical school in McDonough, GA. Being the first group of N&W engineer trainees to arrive there for our month-long training, we were looked upon as the beasts with three heads and inferior to the former great engineers of the Southern Railway. They changed their tune when we showed them we were expected to take 180-190 cars of coal, weighing in at over 23,000 tons out of the Bluefield yard at 10 mph and then down grade at 30 mph for a distance of 25 miles. While the Bluefield run was beautiful and challenging, I preferred running trains to Bristol where the tranquil and idyllic scenery, coupled with fast running, was the perfect experience.

In 1997, I realized my dream to run passenger trains when I left NS and hired on with Amtrak on the route between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, PA. It was a dream come true running trains at such places as the Rockville Bridge, Lewistown, Altoona, Horseshoe Curve, Gallitzin, Johnstown, and Pittsburgh.

In 1999, I switched things up a bit and became the Operations Manager in Chicago, IL, setting up movements of all private cars, and planning and overseeing special and

excursion trains on Amtrak.

2001 saw me off to Richmond as an engineer where my routes took me from Richmond to Washington on the former RF&P, to Florence, SC on the former ACL, and to Raleigh, NC on the ACL and the Southern. During those years, I also ran out of Raleigh to Southern Pines, NC, former SAL, and Charlotte, NC, former Southern Railway. I finished up my career on train 91, the Silver Star, Richmond to Raleigh and train 80, the Carolinian, Raleigh to Richmond.

As you can see, I love trains and I want to put that passion into the Roanoke Chapter; thank you for that opportunity!

Programs

Dorr Tucker has retired as Program Chairman. We thank him for his many years of dedicated service. If you would be interested in taking over this job or have an idea for a program, please contact President Chuck Akers.

Membership Report

By Delta Helmer Pelgrim

This is my first report for 2018 and I would like to say thank you for all those individuals who have already renewed. If you haven't renewed yet there is still time to do so. Please see the insert in the 4th Quarter 2017 Turntable Times or contact me. You can renew both Chapter and National dues on the same form.

We currently have 120 members who have renewed for 2018. New members include: Ryan Stuart, Ian Whaley and Timothy Witt. A welcome back to renewing members Ken and Shirley Jensen and Kent Womack.

As a reminder, members need to be both a member of national and the local chapter. Those of you who renewed through the Roanoke Chapter should be receiving confir-

mation from National within the month.

If you are not receiving the e-mails and would like to be added to the e-mail distribution list, please e-mail me at membership.rcnrhs@gmail.com.

I hope to have 2018 rosters by the April general meeting, so please renew to get your name in the roster.

Treasurer Report – February 2018

By Delta Helmer Pelgrim

You may know me from my Membership Chairman duties, but I have also taken over as Treasurer. I am honored to hold a position that my father held for many years.

I am always happy to share any and all Chapter financial data with you. Feel free to e-mail me at treasurer.rcnrhs@gmail.com with and questions/concerns/requests.

I would like to remind everyone that the Chapter has a reimbursement form which I would prefer any members use if they have a reimbursable expense. I can send the form to anyone who needs one.

We have also started memberships with GrantStation and Grant Gopher; both organizations provide listings of grants that we can apply to. If you would like to help searching those databases for opportunities let me know and I will share our login information. If you want to help research and write grants, the Board is always looking for help.

Finally, the Board set up an AmazonSmile account. Basically, .05% of the purchases made by individuals registered for the Roanoke Chapter will be donated to the Chapter. It might not seem like much but with over 100 members, and you can tell your friends, it will add up. If you have problems setting up your AmazonSmile account feel free to contact me. Again, my e-mail address is treasurer.rcnrhs@gmail.com.

Mechanical Committee Report – Winter 2017 / 2018

By Lewis Foster

This winter has seen quite a bit of activity at the 9th street yard. We had the opportunity to get some neighboring space to the yard in order to have additional storage space for the supplies and equipment in the Chapter's collection. This will allow us to organize the signal equipment and several other things that have been stored along the fence line at the yard and let us gain some significant additional space north of track 1. That area will allow us to add an additional track to the yard, providing track space for 6



Newly installed Electrical locker in coach 537. Photo by Lewis Foster



Newly expanded space at 9th Street Facility as show by the light color lines.

additional pieces of equipment.

We are planning to begin track work later this spring at the yard, once we have finished clearing the right of way for the new track and leveling the east end of the yard (it currently has a 1-degree downgrade from the middle of the yard to the east end). Several Chapter members are currently working on gathering the necessary rail and supplies for the new track.

Work is nearly complete on the interior of the 537, the Chapter's Norfolk and Western P3 class coach. The last of the HVAC controls are now in place, along with the new power selection control system. We finished up the last detail painting over Presidents' Day weekend and will apply the final coat of floor sealer shortly. Once the weather warms enough, we will finish the last metalwork on the south side of the car and in the vestibule. At that point, the car will be ready for prep and exterior paint.

For 2017 we carried over 6,000 passengers during our run days at the Virginia Museum of Transportation. This included 1,200 for a new event in October around Halloween. We had another successful year working with VMT for their special events and are looking forward to 2018.

If you're interested in volunteering at the yard on the weekends, or even if you'd just like to drop by and see what we're working on, feel free to contact Gary Gray or Lewis Foster. Photos of our projects are also available on the Chapter Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/roanokenrhs>

Four Chapter Members Achieve NRHS Fifty Year Awards And One Reaches 25 Years

By Carl S. Jensen, National Representative

Dorr Tucker, Gordon Hamilton, Walt Alexander and Bob Simpson all received the fifty-year achievement pins and certificates this year. Brad Dobbins is the recipient of a 25-year award. These award records are maintained by the national office of NRHS and are only awarded for continuous membership in NRHS with no break in service over the years. If the individual maintained NRHS unbroken membership over time, regardless of what chapter he or she belonged to, they become eligible.

(Note – while Roanoke Chapter was initially chartered in October 1955 to facilitate hosting the National Convention of NRHS in summer 1957, a period of little activity followed until the organization went dormant

in 1961. In 1968 the Chapter as we know it today was formed. See story in Turntable Times, Vol 49, Nbr 4, Pg 12 for more details and also reports in this issue.)

This year, records showed Dorr and Gordon have continuous service as Roanoke Chapter members. Both made notable contributions to the very early (1968) formation of the chapter as we know it today. Dorr was our first newsletter producer (not sure we had a designated Editor at that early time, although Dorr did become Editor soon thereafter). Gordon put on our very first members program with slides from his collection.

Walt Alexander first joined NRHS through the Lake Shore Chapter in Erie, Pa., for the first 7 years before being transferred by General Electric to Salem. He joined us quickly. Walter was our long-time membership chairman as well as an active worker on our passenger equipment and excursion volunteer.

Bob Simpson was among the very first persons to attend organizing meetings where some 10 or so individuals formed the chapter. He served for several years as Chapter Secretary and later as Chapter President.

Brad Dobbins, is the son of another Chapter pioneer, Kemper Dobbins, Nickel Plate and N&W attorney, and artist of some renown, who had an interest in the narrow-gauge railroads of Colorado. He and Brad teamed up to assist in the formation of the chapter in 1968 as well. Brad left the area for a few years before rejoining 25 years ago. The break in service is about the only reason he too is not a fifty-year recipient.

Jeff Sanders is another 50-year awardee, having received his in 2017. Although he was a Roanoke resident, he got the "bug" when 4501 came to town and initially joined NRHS through the TVRM in Chattanooga.

Jim Overholser received his 50-year award in 2014. Jim joined the Old Smoky Chapter

in Knoxville, Tenn. When he hired out on the N&W in 1975 he transferred his membership to the Roanoke Chapter and kept it here even when living in Ohio and Indiana.

The author of this article is also a 50-year member, having joined NRHS when the C. P. Huntington Chapter was chartered in 1959. We moved to Roanoke with N&W in 1965, although I left the Huntington area in early 1960, and belonged to the Midwest Chapter in Cleveland for several years.

We may have another 50-year member of so in the Chapter that we aren't aware of, and if so I hope he or she will let us know who you are and when you received your reward. I expect we will have some more 50-year veterans in 2019.

Roanoke Chapter Celebrates 50 Years

By Jeff Sanders

On November 27, 1967, a group of interested railfans and rail historians gathered in the auditorium of the Times-World Building in Roanoke, VA, to organize a new Chapter of the NRHS, with "definite goals and worthy objectives."

The minutes of that first meeting, which followed a week later, reported twenty-five people signed the roster at the first meeting. They noted that the National Vice-President for Membership, Carrel I. Tod, traveled to Roanoke from his home in Arlington, VA, to counsel the group on the dos and don'ts of organizing a Chapter.

Temporary Chairman C. B. Sterzing turned the floor over to Carl Jensen who nominated George H. Kelch as President of the new Chapter. Mr. Kelch was authorized to appoint a committee to name a slate of persons to be considered for officers at the next meeting. The nominating committee was appointed, consisting of K.A. Dobbins, F.M. Guilfoyle, C.S. Jensen, R.A. Meyerhoff, R.D.

Simpson, Jr., and Carl B. Sterzing, Jr.

Entertainment for that first evening was presented by Mr. Thomas W. (Bill) Saunders of the Norfolk & Western Railway Public Relations and Advertising Department. We were treated to three excellent 16mm films of the N&W Railway. Steam at its best!

Membership applications were handed out, to be returned at the December meeting.

The Roanoke Chapter was off and running!

At the December meeting, with Mr. Kelch officiating, the other directors and officers were elected. They were, in addition to Mr. Kelch: VP Carl Jensen, Secretary Bob Simpson, Treasurer Jim Carter, National Director Joe Austin, and directors at-large Dr. Frank Guilfoyle and Bob Meyerhoff. Our first slide show presented by a member was one of Steam and Traction by Gordon Hamilton.

By May of 1968, Roanoke Chapter planned and operated our first excursion, from Roanoke to Princeton, WV, going west bound on the original N&W and then returning east on the former Virginian Railway. The Virginian was at that time being prepared to be pulled up between Kellysville, WV, and Narrows, VA, to make room for a new four-lane Route 460. Our first trip was a success!

By the end of the year we had run the former NKP 759 on excursions out of Roanoke. Not a bad start for a new chapter.

In February the first Chapter newsletter, Turntable Times, Volume I, Number I, was published, with Acting Editor Dorr Tucker. Also in our first year we received two coaches and one baggage car from the Southern Railway. This was to be the beginning of a love affair of passenger equipment, when at one point during the first reincarnation of N&W 611, we had as many as seven (or eight) passenger cars in the 611's train.

Even though "the times they are a'changin'," we are poised to enter our

next fifty years with lots of good ideas and plans. We now have a \$2.3 million restored and paid for, Virginian Railway Passenger Station, several passenger cars with bright futures, and a partnership with the Virginia Museum of Transportation, where we operate train rides for their visitors. Also, we are an integral part of the Museum's operation of the world famous 611.

We've gotten our second wind and are ready to go the next (fifty) miles.

1968 – Amazing Growth for New NRHS Chapter

By Dorr Tucker

Following the organizational meeting of our reactivated Roanoke Chapter on November 27th, 1967, we quickly headed into an amazing year of growth that became the pinnacle in the development of main line rail excursions.

Our success was instrumental due to two factors. First and foremost were our dedicated, imaginative, enthusiastic members. Second, were two railways (N&W and Southern) with extensive passenger operations including a surplus of rolling stock along with related executives who would give us collateral support.

So, when this writer attended the organizational meeting I was in a room full of strangers except for railfan friend Jeff Sanders, although I had met Gordon Hamilton, a friend of my brother, several years before. We met S.R. Winegard that evening and began a friendship that would last for a lifetime.

My West Virginia friends had advised me to look up Huntington chapter member Carl Jensen who had been with Norfolk and Western in Portsmouth but I can't recall talking with him until the January meeting. However, I do remember his advice and suggestions on a Chapter newsletter around

NEW RIVER VALLEY SPRING EXCURSION

Via
SPECIAL TRAIN

May 25, 1968

Sponsored by Roanoke Chapter
National Railway Historical Society

EXCURSION FEATURES

- Scenic Dome Air Conditioned Coach -
- Beautiful Spring Scenery of New River Valley -
- Special Free Antique Auto Show at Princeton, West Virginia -
- Special Stop at the New River Palisades -
- Free Souvenir Literature Describing the Route -
- Ride Through Two Mile-Long Tunnels -
- Air Conditioned, Reclining Seat Coaches -
- Lunch Counter Car Serving Sandwiches, Soft Drinks, Candy at Reasonable Prices-
- Open Observation Gondola Car for Photographers -
- Ride Over Line of Former Virginian Railway, part of which will soon be abandoned due to Highway Construction -

SCHEDULE - Eastern Standard Time (Daylight Saving)

Leave - Roanoke, Va. 9:00 A.M.
 *Leave - Christiansburg, Va. 9:50 A.M.
 Arrive - Princeton, W. Va. 12:20 P.M.
 (Via Norfolk and Western Mainline)
 Leave - Princeton, W. Va. 1:20 P.M.
 Arrive - Roanoke, Va. 4:15 P.M.
 (Via Former Virginian Railway Mainline)

FARES

Adults \$9.00
 Children \$6.00
 (Under 12)
 - No passes or other reduced fare certificates honored.-

***SPECIAL NOTE:** Train will not stop at Christiansburg on the return trip due to routing over former Virginian Railway line. Passengers who board at Christiansburg should make advance arrangements for their own transportation from Roanoke back to Christiansburg. Norfolk and Western Railway Train No. 3, "The Pocahontas" leaves Roanoke at 7:20 P.M., arrives Christiansburg at 8:12 P.M., fare \$1.49.

FOR INFORMATION

Write or Call

Mr. Pete Plunkett
 905 Washington Avenue
 Vinton, Virginia

(Area Code 703) 342-7396

Purchase Tickets At:

JULIEN'S SHOES, 27 W. Church Avenue
 Roanoke, Virginia

or

Use the order form at the bottom.

TRAIN CAPACITY IS LIMITED

Ticket Order DEADLINE

May 15, 1968

Use the order form below

MAIL TO: Mr. Pete Plunkett, 905 Washington Avenue, Vinton, Virginia
 PLEASE enclose check or money order made out to Roanoke Chapter, N.R.H.S. WITH THIS ORDER.

MY MAILING ADDRESS IS:

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ Zip _____

PLEASE SEND ME:

Adults at \$9.00 .. \$ _____
 Children \$6.00 .. \$ _____
 Total Remittance \$ _____

January '68. The TURNTABLE TIMES name was my idea derived from Huntington's GONDOLA GAZETTE. I thought that it was rather corny at the time, but now it is a Chapter Icon. Brad Dobbins arranged for his Dad, Kemper Dobbins, to paint in a "J" on a turntable for the first issue masthead that was OK considering that Mr. Dobbins was a rather abstract painter. Ken Miller

was in Junior High at the time and probably knew nothing about the organization where he eventually became an outstanding leader, although he was learning a lot from his Dad, Elbert, a Radford Division Conductor. Along with Mr. Kelch, I got to know Bob Simpson, Bruce Sterzing, Jim Carter, Joe Austin and Dr. Frank Guilfoyle. For some unknown reason, I never remember talking with Bob Meyerhoff.

We didn't have a mechanical committee for our first excursion to Princeton on May 25, 1968. Norfolk and Western provided a 17(?) car train powered by three blue GP-9s, including an ex-Wabash dome car, baggage car for snacks and souvenirs plus three hard riding "freight gondola cars" with bench seats that offered a magnificent 360 degree view of the landscape. The last passenger car, the only Pg (1600 series) heavyweight coach in the train, was intentionally placed ahead of the open cars account operating compatibility.

Our mechanical committee was started when Brad Dobbins and I painted the top half of the dutch doors that had been cut by the N&W for ex-SR coaches 1204 and 1205 (most heavyweight cars originally had one piece exterior doors).

We did this under the shed in the coach yard (now the location of the Research Department rolling stock). We entered without authorization or permission and understood that Mr. Kelch had TOLD Bob Claytor to cut and weld the four doors. The coach yard employees knew that we were there and never said a word. Another era, indeed! Later, before the 759 trips in early

November, I was able to get John Hancock to make a drum tail sign (THE VIRGINIAN) for the VIRSO TURN. In the meantime Jeff was working with L. Jack White on various projects. At one point (not sure of the date) Jack said that he had to "go to school" (self teacher) to learn how to fix the steam ejector air conditioning on cars 1204 and 1205.

With three heavyweight rail fan railroaders (Bruce Sterzing, Carl Jensen and Mr. Bob Claytor) aboard, our November trips behind former NKP Berkshire 759 were successful despite a hot box on car 1205. These excursions paved the way for future operations although we had to wait almost two years for another steam-powered trip.

Before we sign off on this brief analysis we must mention two individuals who had a dynamic impact on our growth and development. David Helmer and Julian Sacks are no longer with us, but they always put achievements over rhetoric. We had many other significant members not mentioned here, but a book would be the best way to illustrate their contributions.

Mixed Freight

By Mr. Robin R. Shavers

2018 marks 50 years since the merger of the Pennsylvania Railroad and the New York Central System to create the Penn Central. One year later Penn Central was forced to include the New York, New Haven & Hartford. One year after that, the Penn Central filed for bankruptcy. During that time period I was basically just a train watcher and kept up with the railroad scene via the TV news and local newspapers. In later years I would discover TRAINS magazine and then the back issues later on to read up on the technicalities and politics behind the scenes of that merger.

Here is my annual listing of calendars that correspond to the current year: 1990 and

2007.

2017 marked the 40-year anniversary of Bevell's Hardware store in the heart of downtown Blackstone, Virginia. For the past 20 years or so it has presented a holiday season railroad display that attracts thousands of people from everywhere from Thanksgiving weekend to the first full week of the new year. The store's owner is a bonafide train enthusiast and he came up with the commemorative tee shirt for the anniversary. A beautiful, well-done picture of N&W No. 611 is on the back next to the Blackstone depot and a classic pickup truck. The shirts are in a variety of colors and I lucked out with purchasing the last red one in my size. The N&W high iron is just two blocks east of the store.

For a 10-month trial period the Old Dominion Chapter NRHS will charge a \$5.00 admission fee to tour their Richmond Railroad Museum. This trial period will be in effect from March 1 to December 31, 2018. After the trial period, the ODC will examine the financial benefits or liabilities of the fee to determine whether to maintain or abolish it.

As a downright hater of railcar graffiti, I have been notified that the Norfolk Southern SOUTHERN RAILWAY HERITAGE caboose has been defiled. A railfan associate/NS engineer personally saw to it that the cab was placed in a safe location after its daily duties. When he had to mark off due to possible injuries from an auto collision, the fill in engineer did not pursue a likewise concern so the darn vandals attacked. By the way, he was not injured from the collision. Glad I got my photos when I did.

It is probably safe to say that if you are a railroad hobbyist to any real degree, you probably purchase, off the magazine rack or via subscription, railroad related magazines. Sometime down the track you might

want to thin the collection or THE BOSS might suggest you do likewise. A lot of us usually want to get some sort of financial benefit from the mags so we try to sell them at reasonable or dirt cheap prices at train shows and/or model railroad events. Here is another suggestion. Donate them to places that have customer waiting rooms or areas such as auto repair shops, health care waiting rooms, veteran care facilities, and a host of similar places. Think about it folks, most of these places feature pretty lame subject matter magazines. Yes I realize some people will feel the same towards railroad related subject matter. I myself keep magazines of personal interest in my auto when faced with self-entertainment during the waiting including massive traffic tie ups. Always get permission first, don't just bring a stack of magazines to a place of business and depart the premises. Make sure they are clean and presentable especially if it is a professional scenario. Here is also an idea to encourage possible membership to your railroad hobby clubs and organizations. This might require authorization from the organization's officials beforehand. Stamp the magazine with the organization's name, website, and other contact information. The stamp could read this magazine is donated by the club's name and followed with the contact information. Public libraries and school libraries may also be considered.

Back in the early nineties, there was talk within the railroad industry that the need for boxcars was coming to an end with so much cargo being shipped via containers and bulk commodities moving by covered hoppers and more liquids moving by tank cars. Despite the above prediction, the common and specially equipped boxcars soldier on and personally I do not see these cars leaving the freight moving scene, period.

My last contribution to the Turntable

Times focused on my audio recording efforts as part of my railroading hobby. I am going to add a bit more tonnage to that article to fill out this Mixed Freight. As a youngster, I was encouraged to listen to and take advice from others if it was feasible. While living in Danville, I befriended a man by the name of Caz Dalton. He was older than I by at least seven years. Caz's hobby was collecting and working with audio equipment and listening to rock music that was considered underground. He did have a mild interest in steam locomotives and thanks to me he always tried to make it to trackside to photograph steam excursions that passed thru Danville. He took remarkable photos but was not into chasing. I turned him on to some of my train tapes and he was impressed at the quality of sounds I got just from using a portable unit. I will never forget the following statement from him. "Robin, your train sound recordings are very good. I do however recommend that you use a higher quality of tape. I highly recommend Maxell and TDK." I took his advice and that was back in the seventies and those tapes are still part of my listening pleasure today for train sounds and music. Before taking his advice, I bought and used what was inexpensive. That was indeed a very bad philosophy to adhere to if my aim was to listen to the tapes decades down the road. Also, he had a dual cassette deck so he was able to transfer the train sounds from the poor quality tape onto the higher quality. Caz bought tapes by the case so he allowed me to buy tapes from him at a lower price.

Most of us have heard the statement "If you want something done right, do it yourself." During that era of me collecting Southern Railway freight car numbers, I came up with the idea of having a girl that I was crazy about collect numbers for me, too. She and her younger brother and sister

lived with their grandmother who lived in a house with the Southern's Danville & Western line roughly 200 feet from their front door. Things were going great until I started noticing that the coal hopper numbers she was writing down for me just were out of sync with the Southern coal hopper car numbers I was familiar with. When I questioned her about the numbers she replied "Oh those are C&O cars." When I asked her why she included C&O car numbers when I stressed Southern car numbers only she replied "I thought they were Southern cars assigned to carrying Coal & Ore." I explained to her that the C&O was a railroad known as the Chesapeake & Ohio, not coal and ore. After two more weeks, she lost complete interest.

New VMT Executive Director

Lisa Sphar was named the new Executive Director of the Virginia Museum of Transportation. Former Director Bev Fitzpatrick retired effective January 1. Congratulations, best wishes, and good luck to both. Roanoke Chapter welcomes the opportunity to continue our partnership with VMT.

VMT Sponsoring Private Car Excursions

The Virginia Museum of Transportation is sponsoring May excursions in the private dome car Moonlight Dome on Amtrak between Washington, DC, and Roanoke and a separate excursion to Savannah, Georgia. The operation of these trips will be behind Amtrak trains and not the 611 but proceeds from the trips will benefit the continued maintenance of the 611.

May 4 to 6 is the round trip to Savannah.

May 10 to 13 are the trips between Washington and Roanoke.

See the VMT website for more informa-

tion - <http://www.vmt.org/event/private-dome-car-excursions-washington-d-c-roanoke/>

There will also be a one-way trip from Washington to Pittsburg, PA, on May 13.

Norfolk Southern Closing Roanoke Dispatching Office

Norfolk Southern has announced they will be consolidating the dispatching offices from around the NS system to Atlanta. This includes the dispatchers now working in the Pocahontas Division offices in Roanoke. No timetable for the move has yet been announced. NS said the current 56 employees in the Roanoke dispatching office will be offered jobs in the new centralized office in Atlanta. (Norfolk Southern and news reports)

Restoration of the Boones Mill Station Underway

By Brad Dobbins

Via Lynchburg's "Blue Ridge Dispatcher" I attended the open house / groundbreaking ceremony for the restoration of the Boones Mill station on January 30th to kick off the VDOT grant work. There were quite a number of people there, but I did not recognize anyone from Roanoke or Lynchburg.

The crowd gathered inside the main section of the depot and, after a talk, went outside for the brief groundbreaking event. One of the Roanoke TV stations was there. The depot was moved over in one piece and they were still pouring the concrete for the footings when it was on its way over. Raising money for the move and so forth was tight; the depot missed being demolished by two days.

The station was built around 1897 and the last passenger train was around 1960. The last agent there was a woman, Luetta McNeil (Editor's note: In the original article,

Ms. McNeil first name was not correct, it has been corrected here). Before her, the agent was Mr. Digby Green, who served at Boones Mill for 30 years and for the N&W for 50 years. The street next to the depot was renamed for him.

The plan is to keep the depot as it was "back in the day" and not modernize it inside. Location is just east of the former location, about where the Continental Homes plant used to be. In the same area will be an all-weather, year round farmer's market. That will be in back of the depot, across the parking lot. Modern bathrooms and so-forth will be located in the market. They plan to use authentic old stoves to heat the depot, but they will be gas fired. They are looking for railroad items to display, especially those that actually were in the depot. The family of the last agent donated her desk to the museum.

A 1/48 scale model of the Boones Mill depot is displayed inside. A young man from Forest, VA, Kevin Simpson built the model. He also designed the money-raising T-shirts for the Boones Mill depot. There is also a caboose in back of the depot, which will be displayed on track east of the depot. It was said to be from the P&WV and appears to have a set of caboose trucks with it. Caboose will need restoration outside and probably inside as well.

Today the depot sits on proper footings but there remains a lot of work to do in and around the structure plus working on a proper parking lot, the grounds, laying some track (donated by NS) and other tasks. They are still working to raise more funds. Work is going on in the Farmer's Market now as well. This appeared to be a repurposed building. In addition, the restoration group is hoping to install the train order signals, which are missing. I believe that the typical hand-operated semaphores were used.

O. Winston Link Color Photography

By Bill Arnold

During the period from January 1956 to March 1960, O. Winston Link made black and white and color photos of the Norfolk and Western Railway, the last steam railroad in America. He wanted to preserve steam locomotives, the people who worked on them, and the people who "lived along the line." His goal was to develop night photography by the use of flash bulbs. That success is well known today!

However very little is known about his color work. Several months ago, the Link Museum was approached by the National Railway Historical Society to provide infor-



Courtesy O. Winston Link Museum

mation on his color photography in an upcoming issue of their NRHS BULLETIN. All of this issue will be dedicated to color with 35-40 photographs; text by Tony Reeve (who has written many articles on Winston Link); photo titles/captions by Ellen Arnold; and OWLM staff/volunteers.

NRHS members will receive their copies by mail around early May and we will have copies for sale in the Link Museum Gift Shop.

Amtrak Reservations

Train departure on weekdays (to Boston) is 6:19 AM and 8:40 AM on weekends and holidays (to New York City). Return times to Roanoke are around 10 PM. More information is available at www.Amtrak.com or by calling 1-800-USARAIL or visiting the Amtrak agent in Lynchburg.

Amtrak News

Richard Anderson, a former chief executive of Delta Air Lines, is now the Amtrak President and CEO. When former Norfolk Southern Wick Moorman took over as Amtrak CEO in 2016 he said he would not be staying long but has agreed to stay on as an advisor after December 31, 2017.

Amtrak is continuing a "Refreshing" of the hundreds of Amtrak Amfleet I cars used in Northeast Regional trains. Seat cushions, lights, carpeting and other work will be completed on the approximately 40-year-old Budd-built cars over the next several months. Some of the work is being done in Roanoke overnight when the Northeast Regional train is serviced.

<http://blog.amtrak.com/2017/08/amfleet-refresh/>

Old Dominion Chapter Excursions from Dillwyn

Tickets for the 2018 Virginia Springtime Rambler with guests the Tom Mix Rangers

are now on sale. On May 12, we will run 1.5 hour trips (great for the little ones) at 9:30 and 11:30 am followed by a 3.5 hour trip to the James River at New Canton at 1:30 pm. On May 19 and June 2, we will run 3.5 hour trips at 9:30 and 1:30. All trips depart from Dillwyn Union Station (aka the Buckingham Branch RR office). Get your tickets NOW!

www.odcnrhs.org

DOVER HARBOR Trip Planned

Washington Chapter is sponsoring a trip with their private lounge-sleeping car Dover Harbor from Roanoke to Alexandria and Washington, Leaving Saturday May 26, at 8:40 AM on Amtrak Train 156; arriving Washington at 1:35 PM. It does not return until the next night, Sunday May 27, at 4:35 PM on Amtrak Train 147, arriving Roanoke at 9:33 PM. Passengers must make their own Saturday May 26 overnight accommodations at their expense in Washington. Fare is \$269 round trip, and tickets are available only from the DC Chapter. Food and beverage will be available. For full information and tickets, contact them at reservations@dcnrhs.org or call 202-627-6978. Fares from and to Lynchburg are the same.

Celebrate our 50th Anniversary?

We are looking for suggestions to celebrate our 50th anniversary. Obviously, a main line excursion would be great, but seems out of the question at this point in time. So, put on your thinking caps, and contact any of the board members with your ideas. A weekend outing via bus and/or train might be a good plan, but needs someone to head up the planning.

The board has discussed a Christmas Banquet and in fact has a date reserved, but there may well be some other ideas out amongst the members, so tell us what you come up with!

Board Meetings

The Chapter Board meets once, or more, a month at the Board Room in the Virginian Passenger Station, Express Building. The meetings begin at 7 PM and usually last to after 9 PM. Members are welcome to attend, but we ask you to be recognized before you add to a discussion, and that some things may be discussed that are sensitive and not to be discussed outside the board meeting.

In addition, the board room is not large, and visitors may or may not have a seat. If you have business to bring to the board, please contact the President in advance of the meeting, so that your item can be added to the agenda.

UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

Regular Meeting Locations are at the O. Winston Link Museum. Board Meetings are at the Virginian Station

March 15, 2018 - General Meeting
April 3, 2018 Board Meeting
April 19, 2018 - General Meeting
May 1, 2018 - Board Meeting
May 17, 2018 - General Meeting
June 5, 2018 - Board Meeting
June 21, 2018 - General Meeting
July 3, 2018 - Board Meeting
July 19, 2018 - General Meeting

Visit us on the web: www.RoanokeNRHS.org

Turntable Times is published quarterly 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 and non-staff contributors of the Turntable Times and do not necessarily reflect those of the members, officers or directors of the Chapter. Items of interest should be sent to Editors, P.O. Box 13222, Roanoke, VA 24032

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