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W. A. "BILL" MERCK EDITOR

10TH ANNIVERSARY

APRIL PROGRAM: Believe you will agree that our programs this year have been nothing but excellent. We have another good one lined up for April. One of our new members, Kenneth R. Combs who is stationed at the Little Rock Air Force Base will present a slide program along with narration on some of our eastern railroads, primarily the electrics. Electrics and traction are certainly a big part of the total railroad scene and am sure Ken's program will be very interesting. Date is April 8th at 2 P M at the Missouri Pacific Building in North Little Rock. Lets have another good attendance and bring those visitors. We wish to extend our thanks again to B. B. Garrett, Cotton Belt, Tyler, Texas, for the very interesting program he presented in March. Those slides of the Cotton Belt certainly brought back a lot of nostalgia.

PASSENGER EXTRA AND OTHER COTTON BELT NEWS

Several items pertaining to the Cotton Belt have been in the news lately and thought you might be interested. First, that line operated a passenger extra into and out of Memphis, the purpose of which was to allow S.P. and C.B. officials the opportunity to inspect SSW's new piggy back facilities at Memphis. This is located on property purchased by Cotton Belt sometime ago. This extra arrived at the pig ramp at 3:40 AM on 3/8 and departed the ramp destined Shreveport, La. at 7:30 AM on 3/9. Equipment on train was as follows: Engines SP 3198 and 3199 (GP40P's used in San Jose-Frisco commute service) SP 292 sleeper ("Sunset) stainless steel, SP AIRISLE, SP STANFORD, SP SUNSET, the latter three cars being business cars. Among officials on board the train on outbound trip was Southern Pacific Chairman & Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Benjamin F. Biaggini. The train was spotted in view of highway traffic adjacent to a busy Memphis interstate and motorists passing had a beautiful view of the train. Information on this train was a cooperative effort between our friend Keith White, Editor, THE MEMPHIS BUFF, and ye ed.

Another item courtesy Keith White: A couple of times during the last two months, Cotton Belt operated out Memphis over ICG on that line's Bluford and Cairo Districts to northern interchange points with Conrail; the first time in January when snow and ice conditions in the East St. Louis area virtually shut operations down; the other was in late February due to snow and ice again. Thru the Memphis Terminal some of the trains operated over Union Railway and L&N to Aulon and others ran into ICG's South Yard where waycars and engines switched ends running via the passenger main thru the city.

One additional item on Cotton Belt: That line and Southern Pacific have recently inaugurated a new fast freight service out of Pine Bluff to our neighbor to the south, Mexico. Out of Pine Bluff the new service is named "El Bufalo Blanco", the White Buffalo. It operates daily to Mexico City via part-of-entry sister cities of Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras. At the other end NdeM has established a schedule from Mexico City known as "Zorro", the Fox. It connects with SP in Eagle Pass for service to Pine Bluff and East St. Louis. Transit time is 34 Hours. (This item courtesy of SOUTHERN PACIFIC BULLETIN) Believe you will agree this is really "rolling them".

Below is shown Southern Railway Steam Excursion Schedule April thru June:

| <u>DATE</u> | <u>TRIP</u> | <u>ENGINE</u> |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------|
| Sat. April 7 Sun. April 8 | Birmingham, Ala. to Chattanooga, TN. each day Sponsored by Heart of Dixie Chapter, NRHS. | 2839 |
| Sat. April 21 Sun. April 22 | Atlanta, Ga. to Chattanooga, TN. and return each day., sponsored by Atlanta Chapter, NRHS. | 2839 |
| Sat. April 28 Sun. April 29 | Chattanooga, Tn. to Oneida, TN. and return each day. Sponsored by Tennessee Valley RR. Museum. | 610 ?? |
| Wed. May 2 Thu. May 3 | Birmingham, to Sheffield, Ala. one way Sheffield, Ala. to Memphis, Tn., one way sponsored by North Alabama Railroad Club | 4501 |
| Sat. May 5 Sun. May 6 | Memphis, Tn. to Corinth, Ms. and return each day sponsored by Sentimental Journey, Inc. | 4501 |
| Sat. May 12 Sun. May 13 | Knoxville to Chattanooga, Tn. and return each day. Sponsored by Old Smoky Chapter, NRHS. | 2839 or 610 |
| Sat. May 19 Sun. May 20 | Cincinnati, O. to Danville, Ky. and return each day. Sponsored by Cincinnati Railroad Club. | 2839 or 610 |
| Sat. May 26 Sun. May 27 | Lexington, Ky. to Chattanooga Choo-Choo one way steam to Danville, FP7's beyond Chattanooga, Tn. to Lexington, Ky. one way sponsored by Bluegrass Railroad Club. | FP7's |
| Sat. June 2 Sun. June 3 | Louisville to Danville, Ky. and return each day Sponsored by Kentucky Railroad Museum | 2839 or 610 |
| Sat. June 9 Sun. June 10 | Huntingburg, Ind. to Centralia, Ill. and return each day. Sponsored by Mayor's Committee, Huntingburg. | 2839 or 610 |
| Sat. June 16 | Lexington to Danville, Ky. and return. Two trips sponsored by Bluegrass Railroad Museum | 2839 or 610 |
| June 23 to July 21 | Tentative trips from Lexington, Ky. through to Eastern North Carolina are being planned. Information later on these trips. | |

Information on future excursion trips will be forthcoming in a later issue of the newsletter. Of particular interest to our group are the trips with 4501 from Memphis to Corinth, Ms. and return on May 5th and 6th. On good authority we learn that these trips will contain a dining car this year. Sound interesting?? You of course were advised in the March newsletter that Southern had leased ex CP "Royal Hudson" 2839 for excursion service this season. This should be an interesting season for all rail "bugs" and the "fever" is upon us already now that "spring is sprung".

Recently learn that Reading (Chessie) 2101 is almost a total loss after a round-house fire on March 7th at Silver Grove, Ky. The fire blazed undetected for several hours and iron horse 2101 died inside. It is sad indeed when what few iron horses we have left are destroyed. Thanks Keith White for this information.

WILL THE INTER-AMERICAN GO??

Ridership on Amtrak's Inter-American continues to show increases. In December of 1978 ridership on this train was up 17.9 per cent. Possibly nothing now will save the train under Amtrak's restructuring of the system but strong action on the part of Arkansas' congressional delegation in Washington. Something just does not make sense--Example; they keep harping on the energy situation and at the same time want to cut off a good part of what passenger trains we still have, which are very few. We have not seen anything yet on any action taken by any of the Chambers Of Commerce of cities and towns served by the Inter-American. We predict there will come a day when there will be gnashing of teeth, etc. on the fact that our great railroad passenger trains and electric interurban systems are no longer with us. Little Rock-North Little Rock are prime examples of shortsightedness in doing away with a fine streetcar system. They say that the streetcars now could not manipulate the traffic on the city streets. 'horse-feathers'. Perhaps I got off the subject a little but it all ties in with the so called energy shortage. Most railroaders refer to busses as "stink buggies". Very true. Excuse your ed's ramblings but I have to put down what I feel.

On the arrival of the first Amtrak-operated Crescent Limited at New Orleans The Olympia Brass Band of that city played at trackside. From the picture we saw of it Al Hirt and Pete Fountain would have been much better. Where were you Al and Pete?? They left out the best when they didn't get you.(The jazz kings)

We note in recent news article that Pullman Inc., is getting out of the rail passenger car biz and will concentrate its future manufacturing on freight car and truck trailers. Passenger car manufacture will be phased out as soon as practicable. Another sad note to say the least. Was there any company in this great country of ours that ever topped The Pullman Company. They had the finest of everything and now most of the things that Pullman cars contained are among the most sought after collectors items.

Another reminder---Get your DUES in now at the next meeting or mail to Dick Byrd at his home.

Referring again to the C.B. passenger extra---if any of you see any extra passenger movements or get information about them on any rail line in our state please get the information to your editor. With the exception of Amtrak's Inter-American passenger trains operating into and out of Arkansas are few and far between.

You are not drunk if you can lie on the floor without hanging on. A woman is only a woman, a cigar is only a smoke - but a 4-6-0 is a Ten Wheeler. FROM: NRHS NEWS EXTRA, MARCH 1979.

Derailments continue on The Rock in the Little Rock area lines of that system; several lately on Little Rock-Oklahoma City section. Bad track is undoubtedly the culprit. If the proposed sale of Rock Island trackage between Tucumcari, New Mexico and St. Louis to SP-SSW, wonder if The Rock will take some of that cash and put their Little Rock lines in good shape. Remains to be seen. Brinkley-Memphis trackage is now in very good condition due to operation on that section by Cotton Belt.

The Arkansas Railroad Club is a non-profit organization. Regular meetings are held the second Sunday of each month at the MOP Office Building in North Little Rock. Visitors always welcome and refreshments usually available (coffee-coke-cookies). Send news items and exchange newsletters to editor at 5007 Hawthorne Rd. Little Rock, Ark. 72207.

DON'T FORGET TO PAY YOUR DUES