



Arkansas Railroader



LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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FEBRUARY 1979

W. A. "BILL" MERCK EDITOR

10TH ANNIVERSARY

FEBRUARY MEETING: Our program for February will be given by W. F. "Bill" Reed, Superintendent at Pine Bluff for the Cotton Belt. Bill is a long time friend of your editor and is not only a top notch railroader but a fine gentleman as well. Our meeting will be held on Sunday, the 11th starting at 2:00 P M at the Missouri Pacific Office Building in North Little Rock.. We got off to a very good start in January attendance wise and trust we can increase it for February. Please try and make every effort to be on hand and bring those visitors.

NEW MEMBERS: We extend a cordial welcome to a couple of more new members. Kenneth R. Combs who is stationed at the Little Rock Air Force Base and who was a visitor at our January meeting; and, Thomas E. Scott of Sherwood, Ark. Lets all get acquainted with these new members and make them feel at home. We are getting off to a good start on new members this year and lets keep trying to bring in as many as possible. The membership field is unlimited.

Just in case some of you may not know it; there is only one change in our officers for 1979. We will give them all to you anyway; **PRESIDENT;** Bill B. Bailey, **VICE PRESIDENT,** Dr. Bill Pollard, **SECRETARY,** George R. Holt, **TREASURER,** C. R. BYRD, **NRHS DIRECTOR,** OLIFTON E .HULL. Tom Shook is a new member of the board of directors and the **ARKANSAS RAILROADER** is still in the hands of "Ye Ed". Think you will agree this is a fine group of officers and am sure you will give them your full cooperation as you have all of our officers in the past.

RAILROADS OF AMERICA; This is our "theme" show exhibit in the lobby of the Wothen Bank in Little Rock and it is going just great. By the time you receive this news letter however it will be all over for another year. Many visitors have come by the exhibit and all of them have expressed an interest in railroading. Some are prospects for membership in our club and membership applications have been handed out. The largest part of the credit for the exhibit goes to our genial and fine president, Bill Bailey. Bill just has a natural knack for something like this.

Glad to see good member, Wayne Couch at the January meeting after a sojourn in the hospital. Lots of future good health to you Wayne,

Just in case some of you may not know it, our new V.P. ., Bill Pollard of Conway, Ark. edits a nifty little newsletter for the **ARKANSAS ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS**. Most of the newsletter carries up to date news about the future of **AMTRAK'S INTER-AMERICAN**. To quote from Bill's issue for Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 1978 the followings: "The long awaited DOT report is now expected by February 1. A recent map provided to the National Conference of State Railway Officials by "usually reliable sources in the "DOT", shows most train service west of the Mississippi River eliminated. Only the San Francisco Zephyr, the Coast Starlight, the North

Star, and an Ogden to Los Angeles connection would operate in the western half of the United States." Editor's note: What is going to happen to the Inter-American is anybody's guess at this time. We can only hope for the best.

FROM AMTRAK NEWS DECEMBER - 1978: "If you travel to Dallas these days, chances are you'll visit Union Terminal, whether or not you make the trip by rail. Amtrak's station, along with the adjoining 50-story Reunion Tower and Hyatt Regency hotel, is part of Big D's newest major tourist attraction, the 53-acre Reunion complex which also includes a park complete with waterfalls and fountain. Union Terminal, used by Amtrak trains serving Dallas, is a beaux arts structure built in 1914 and now listed on the National Register of Historical Places. Dallas, which for a time was the country's largest city without rail passenger service, now is served by Amtrak's Lone Star and Inter-American. Amtrak's facilities in the station are in process of being refurbished." Editor's note: Remember all those fine passenger trains that used to serve Dallas??

The SAN JOSE, business car of STLSW (Cotton Belt) and usually stationed at Pine Bluff, is, at this writing, on the west coast for renovation and repainting. A very fine car. All recent paint jobs on the car match those of parent SP cars.

C. R. "Dick" Byrd, our genial and able treasurer, was recently elected president of the Arkansas Valley Model Railroad Club. Congratulations 'Dick.

Well, old man winter can't last forever and I am, as I know most of you are, looking forward to spring and watching the mails for news on spring, summer and fall excursions with the likes of 4501, 610, No. 1, and others. Understand, but not actually confirmed, that Clinchfield plans on using their No. 1 over parts of Family Lines this season in addition to operation on Clinchfield. Could this mean that they may actually plan on a run out of Memphis which is on a family line, the L&N. We hope so. Such a trip out of Memphis would be bound to draw a record number of riders. Keep your fingers crossed.

We need to be thinking of a possible excursion run for our members this summer or fall. Its now been some three or four years since we had one. We know that passenger equipment is scarce, especially on short lines, most of whom have none at all. Your ed will do what he can but assistance is needed. Lets talk about it and try and get the ball rolling.

By the way good members, at the next meeting if you think about it, jot down your birthdate (not the year unless you want to) and give it to me. Will try and recognize your birthday in future issues of the newsletter. I think this is a very good idea and makes our members feel that they are being thought of. Many clubs do this as well as many churches in their newsletters. All of our associate members can mail their birthdates to the editor. Let us hear from you.

MERGERS GETTING CLOSER: The BN/FRISCO and SP/ROCK ISLAND is getting closer. Final ICC approval is awaited. In the case of SP/RI; SP would obtain that part of RI from Tucumcari, New Mexico to St. Louis via Kansas City. Part of this route was formerly known as the GOLDEN STATE ROUTE and used by fast passenger trains of the SP/RI including the GOLDEN STATE. It is your ed's opinion that future years will bring many more mergers. It may be the only way that many of our rail systems can survive.

TRAIN RIDING IN THE S T. LOUIS-CHICAGO CORRIDOR

By: Bill Merok

Going back down memory lane to the glory days of the passenger train, which I often do, some of the most satisfying and greatest train riding I ever did was in the St. Louis-Chicago corridor. In those days the Wabash, Chicago & Alton, Illinois Central and the Chicago & Eastern Illinois were all very competitive not only in freight traffic but passenger as well. All of the lines listed now have different corporate names. The C&A-IC is now the ICG, the Wabash is now the N&W and the C&EI is now the MOP.

Lets begin with what I thought was the greatest and finest passenger train on the S t. Louis-Chicago run. This was none other than the famous WABASH BLUE BIRD. This train had everything--beauty, comfort, speed and service. It couldn't be beat. When we (Wife and I) rode it pass holders had to have a special permit. Thru a passenger agent friend of mine with the Wabash I obtained the needed permit. All seats on the train were reserved. We of course did not know where our seats were until we boarded the train one summer morning in S t. Louis Union Station. To our surprise we had dome seats and to make it even finer our seats were on the front row of the dome car. We were afforded an unobstructed view over the top of the train all the way to the smoky end; except in this case the smoky end was a very beautiful two unit diesel painted in the beautiful Wabash colors. Our speed, as I remember was somewhere between 75 and 80 miles per hour on a smooth roadbed and heavy rail. To make the trip even more enjoyable we had lunch in the diner beneath the dome. What a trip.

Another trip in the corridor I will never forget was on the famous C&E I SILENT KNIGHT. This train departed S t. Louis at midnight with arrival in Chicago about 7:30 AM next morning. The drumhead on the rear sleeper had an outline of a shining knight in armour, underneath the knight were the words;---O&EI SILENT KNIGHT. I boarded the train some half hour before departure and had a little time to kill so I walked up the platform to the smoky end. In this case we had a real smoky end. Do not remember the wheel arrangement of the black beauty but it was a big one with O&E I painted on the tender in big letters. The engineer was standing down by the steps and I got into a conversation with him and asked him if he was going to give us a fast ride that night. He remarked "Wait until we get rolling and you will see". He kept his promise; once out in the flat Illinois countryside he opened that black beauty up and we did roll. We got into Chicago on time; crews were changed in the night; don't remember where as at that time I was in the land of nod. Think it was at Danville, Illinois.

And yet another great train I rode was the famous ALTON LIMITED on the Chicago and Alton. This train was another beauty in tuscan red and a long one. As I remember it had at least fifteen to sixteen cars. The C&A paralleled the old Illinois Traction System (now Illinois Terminal) for several miles in Illinois and I remember seeing those big red electrics of the IT going by. The ALTON LIMITED was a great train and when the line was absorbed into the GM&O that line too had some great trains in the corridor including the ABRAHAM LINCOLN and the ANN RUTLEDGE, both of which I had the pleasure of riding.

Each time I was in Chicago I tried to do some train riding in and out of the windy city. Rode such cannonballs as the CNS&M and the OSS &SB. The CNS&M had a "fastie" leaving Chicago about 9:30 AM for Milwaukee. The train originated on the Chicago elevated and ran several miles on that system before coming down to terra firma, pulling up the third rail shoes and putting up the trolley poles. Thats when they started rolling. Since I was sitting right behind the motorman in the front car I could attest to the fast speed. Therewere many highway crossings on the line

(The CNS&M has long been gone from the scene. The OSS&SB still survives but is on shaky ground)

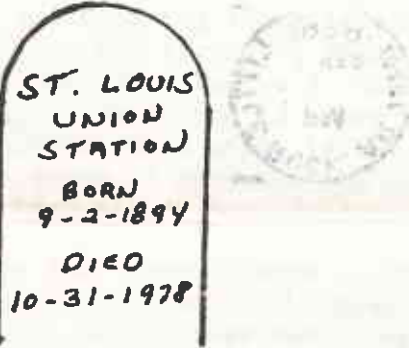
and was really holding my breath over some of them for fear a car or truck would drive right in front of us. On the return trip when the CNS&M conductor took up my pass he noted that I was from Little Rock. He said he had a sister living in Little Rock. Its a strange world.

Another fine electric ride was on the CSS&SB from Chicago to Michigan City, Indiana and return. Although I never experienced it am told on good authority that this line had a two or three car express that arrived in Chicago at about the same time as the famous NYC 20th CENTURY LIMITED. The two trains got along side of one another somewhere out in the countryside close to Chicago and would start racing. The CS&SB always won because when they got along side one another the motorman on the electric would throw the controller over and shoot by the 20th CENTURY like he was standing still. Don't doubt it at all since the heavy steam powered train was no match for the light electric consist. That 20th CENTURY could get up and move however, as all of you know.

I regret that I never got to ride the Illinois Central in this corridor. Am sure that I missed a great train in the I.O. GREEN DIAMOND. It was a beauty and a fast one too. Also in Chicago I never rode the Chicago, Aurora & Elgin which was another electric fastie. The Chicago "EL" and Subway could really run too.

In closing I must give a boost to good old Arkansas in the fast train field. We had our share of the fasties in the COTTON BELT LONE STAR, the MOP SUNSHINE SPECIAL AND EAGLES, the L&ASHREVEPORTER, the ROCK ISLAND ROCKET and the FRISCO KANSAS CITY-FLORIDA SPECIAL. Had the pleasure of riding all these trains more than once. Wish we still had all of them don't you? Almost forgot the KOS SOUTHERN BELLE. A real beauty.

THE END



ST. LOUIS
UNION
STATION
BORN
9-2-1894
DIED
10-31-1978

NEW GRAVE IN THE CEMETERY

The above from GATEWAY RAILLETTER, ST. LOUIS CHAPTER, NRHS. NOV. 1978

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