An oil fired 2-8-2 #1483 with an auxiliary water car attached await assignment with the Clifton “Coal Dock” in the background. This photo is from John A. Mills’s collection, photographer unknown. It was taken prior to 1954 at North Little Rock, Arkansas.

WATERMELON TREATS ON MY 3:00 AM LUNCH BREAK

by: John A. Mills

I began my railroad career as a messenger in the Master Mechanic’s office on June 10, 1948 located on Pike Ave in North Little Rock, Ark. After a few days I was "bumped" and bid on the midnight to 8:00AM messenger job in the roundhouse foreman’s office. Delivering "work orders" out to the large blackboard where locomotive numbers were posted was my primary responsibility. Keeping the office clean, swept and moped and delivering communications to other offices and foremen, such as the service track was another. This meant lots of walking.

The service tracks were located next to the huge Clifton "coal dock" which is so beautifully pictured and described in Joe Collias’ great book, "MOPAC POWER,” published in 1980 on pages 314 to 318, along with
the entire location of the subject of this article.

I soon discovered that on those hot summer nights of June, July and August under the coal chute was a cool place to sit down and eat my sack lunch and watched multiple sections of the Sunshine Special and other passenger trains go by.

I soon noticed that sliced watermelon was being passed around and being consumed by the "laborers" who worked in the service area. Between the rails of one track was a long concrete pit, about 200 or 300 feet long, full of water and where locomotive fires were cleaned and the ashes dropped into the pit. Steam rising up from the hot coals and poor lighting made this a hazardous area and warning signs were in place to remind workers of the danger. Watermelon rinds must have been deposited in the ash pit too as none were ever left lying around.

As a newcomer and "Caucasian" it took a while before I was offered a slice of "dessert." Asking no questions about the source of the treat, I made an unconscionable error of walking into the foreman's office and "spit watermelon seeds" into his waste basket.

"Where did you get the watermelon boy" he asked? "Oh the guys working out on the service track gave it to me while I was eating lunch out under the "coal chute" was my reply. "I'll be damned, I thought I put a stop to that last summer," he then yelled.

It turns out that carloads of watermelons moving north from Hope, Arkansas and the Rio Grande Valley in Texas are arriving on freight trains, parked east of the area less than 100 feet away. Cattle cars with the floors cleaned, I assume, have their floors then covered with hay and/or straw and the melons transported in this manner since no refrigeration is required. If one of the side wooden planks were partially removed or loosened out of line far enough, the melons were "easy picken."

No more questions were asked of me by the foreman. Within a few days the "sand house" talk was that a couple of the laborers had received "unpaid" vacations and one was not coming back to work at all.

Speaking of the "sand house," it was located on the south end of the coal chute and the man who operated it had a portable radio in his quarters. We all have historic events that we remember where we were when the event took place. When Bobby Thompson hit his famous home run that put the New York Giants in the World Series, I had "slipped out" to the sand house and was listening on the radio when it happened.

In September 1948 I had an opportunity to become a machinist apprentice and began working on the day shift. Working on and repairing both steam and diesel locomotives resulted in a very interesting railroading career which was completed on November 30,1994 when I retired from Amtrak as Senior Inspector-Quality Control. (Submitted by John A. Mills, 1/20/2005)
In 1935, the Great Depression was coming to an end and the M-K-T Railroad was picking up business as the economy improved. Business was getting better, according to Matthew S. Sloan, Katy president, in a message published in "The M-K-T Employees' Magazine" that September.

Mr. Sloan and other Katy officials had just returned from a six week trip through a large part of the Katy's territory, to Mexico and to points in the west, and he was touting the importance of a good reputation with the people the railroad was serving or wanted to serve. He said he saw signs of an increasing traffic volume as a boost for the railroad.

For a limited time only fares were reduced on the Katy to points north, east and west for two months, with liberal stopovers and air-conditioned travel in convenient, comfortable, luxurious cars was possible.

Meanwhile T. T. Turner, superintendent of the Katy dining service, had decided to do his part to popularize onions grown in Texas. The industrial agricultural development department had learned that a lot of land in North Texas was suitable to grow onions and had attempted to interest farmers in this area to try raising onions.

Turner reasoned that since the Katy was developing a new industry and having some success - at the same time generating onion distribution business - he needed to find ways to patronize some of these onion shippers and to use some of the home-grown onions in the Katy's dining cars.

He knew that some people liked onions fried, boiled or raw - especially on hamburgers, but he wanted something different. Finally he hit upon a plan to serve a special onion soup on board the Katy's dining cars.

The Katy Railroad's onion soup was served in the railroad's dining cars like the one in this photo which appeared on the back of the April 1935 M-K-T Employees magazine.

An article in the September 1935 M-K-T Magazine compared onions to the little girl, who "when she is good she is very, very good, and when she is bad, she is horrid!" So Mr. Turner set about to carefully train chefs and stewards in the fine art of coaxing all the goodness possible out of the lowly onion and into the soup. In fact, he wouldn't serve the onion soup until it was perfect and a compliment to the dining cars' cuisine.

When it first appeared on the menu, there were very few takers. When prompted to try some, the patrons were a little wary of onion soup. But, little by little its fame grew and the soup was being served to nine out of 10 regular Katy travelers with 90 out of 100 asking particularly for the Katy's special onion soup. It's fame began to spread even beyond the confines of Katy Territory and personnel received as many as 12 requests a day for the recipe.
Mr. Turner gave out the recipe, but said that because as much emphasis is placed on how the soup is made as upon the ingredients that go into it, he couldn't guarantee that everyone who made the soup would make soup that tasted like the Katy onion soup. He did point out though that the ingredients can be changed a little to suite the personal palate and that the soup is very simple.

I know by now readers possibly are tasting onion soup, so here's the recipe provided in 1935 by the Katy Railroad dining service. **Onion Soup** "First, select good firm Texas onions and slice them into one-eighth inch cubes. Then sauté them in butter until they are a light brown. Then place them into a chicken broth. (Any broth will do, but a rich chicken stock gives the finished product a certain delectableness not otherwise possible.)

"Next comes a stock of parsley and some bay leaves and "just the right amount of garlic", and a dash of Worcestershire sauce.

"After boiling for 20 minutes remove the parsley and the soup is ready to serve." The recipe says to pour the soup over croutons or slices of Melba toast then add grated Parmesan or regiano cheese. Since the cheese adds a certain something, Mr. Turner recommends the serving of a dish of extra freshly grated cheese along with the soup.

He said, "Those who follow the recipe religiously and experiment with pinches and dashes of this and that, and leave nothing whatever to chance, will, provided they have the certain something that is a natural attribute only of a master chef, be able to turn out Katy onion soup."

Coincidentally, this same magazine, which has been hiding in my file cabinet for many years, include a Katy Death notice for Pat H. Tobin, who had died on Aug. 17, 1935, at the age of 84 years.

Tobin was mentioned a few weeks ago as the young man, who in 1872, was engineer on the first Katy work train into Denison on Christmas Eve. In 1932 he again piloted a Katy train into Denison in a 60th anniversary celebration of the first train arriving in Texas and to Denison.

Tobin was connected with the Katy for many years until he quit to enter the ice manufacturing business, the Crystal Ice Co., in the 100 block East Woodard. According to the article, he was the patentee of a re-icing car, which the Katy used at Denison and Parsons for many years. He also established many ice manufacturing plants in Texas and Oklahoma. He remained the active manager after the Crystal Ice acquisition by the Southern Ice Company until he retired a few years before his death.

In his later years he worked for the city, helping build Randell Lake. He also established the first cotton compress in Denison and in other cities.

He was a member of the company operating the first refrigerated cars on the railroads in the Southwest and built a cold storage plant at Denison, which was one of the largest in the country in 1935.

Funeral was held at his home and city hall closed during the funeral.

*Donna Hunt is former editor of The Denison Herald. She lives in Denison and can be contacted at dhunlimited@texoma.net.*
Last Rights for the Agency at Alden

By Philip L. Mosley

I had been riding the extra board for most of the summer, full and winter of 1967 while working as an operator for the Santa Fe on the extra board of the Middle Division in Oklahoma and Kansas. I wanted to find a regular job, preferably a small agency someplace, but didn't have enough seniority.

Then my luck changed. I was working the swing job (relief) at Guthrie, Oklahoma, in November 1967, when a bulletin came out advertising two recently vacated agency jobs up in Kansas. They were at Offerle and Alden, so I bid on both of them and ended up being the successful bidder on both. Since both went to work at the same time on the same day, I was given my choice of which one I wanted, so I picked Alden, as it paid the most.

I was advised that the railroad had already received permission from the Kansas State Corporation Commission to close Alden and they planned to close it in late December, but I went up there anyway.

Arkansas Railroader - Little Rock Chapter NRHS
Alden is a small western Kansas town in the old Great Bend District of the Middle Division just west of Sterling, and about 35 miles north of Hutchinson. The agent before me had bid in Jetmore, way out in northwest Kansas, northwest of Dodge City on the Scott City District, since he knew that Alden was doomed.

I stayed in the motel in Sterling and drove the short distance to Alden to work for the three weeks I was Agent there. The depot was a quaint, well-kept Santa Fe branch line type depot and was a radio wayside station. It had not been that long since Alden had a passenger train running through it - an RDC from Newton to Dodge City, through Alden, had been pulled off in 1966. About all that was running was a local, Nos. 45 and 46, that ran mostly at night, although there were a few times that the local came though just after I went to work.

After I had been working there about three days, I received a registered letter from the Superintendent, J.R. Fitzgerald. It contained an official notice to me and a notice to nail on the door of the depot that read "Effective with the close of work December 27, 1967, the Agency at Alden, Kansas, will be abolished, the depot closed and all business with the railroad will henceforth be conducted through the Agency at Sterling, Kansas." Also included were instructions on what to do with all the furniture and company property, and further instructions filling out final reports and the disposition of other matters concerning the demise of the Agency at Alden.

It was a bitterly cold windy typical Western Kansas winter morning when I arrived at work on December 27, 1967. I had already boxed up all the material, closed out the books, completed all the monthly reports and had everything ready for the auditor and officials when they showed up to assist in the funeral for the agency.

First to arrive was D.E. Mader, the Transportation Inspector, out of Newton, (also known as the Assistant Trainmaster). Next came a Mr. Tiller, Traveling Auditor, to help close the accounts. It didn't take Mr. Tiller long to audit the books, close the accounts out, take the cash remittance that I had prepared of $12.35 cash on hand in the cash drawer, pick up the ticket dater and leave.

There was a very old lantern in the depot at Alden with an etched rectangular "Santa Fe Route" emblem on the globe which was used to flag the passenger train before it was pulled off. Being a collector, I noticed it when I first arrived at Alden, but the agent I relieved warned me not to get off with it as the officials knew it was there. As the day to close Alden approached, I thought I would be sly and packed the lantern in a little white box and put it in the freight room out of sight, but alas the first thing Mr. Mader asked for when he got to the depot that morning was the lantern stating that "we need that in Newton." (Yeah, sure!)

The Santa Fe had donated the safe to a church in Dodge City. Soon the section crew showed up, took a window out of the bay window of the depot, removed the safe and then put the window back. The section men also loaded up all the furniture in the depot into a boxcar spotted behind the depot, which I had billed, to the General Storekeeper in Topeka. Next the lineman showed up and disconnected and removed the telegraph and dispatchers phone. And lastly the signal maintainer arrived and started to disconnect the order board.

Mr. Mader was nice enough to take me to lunch that day, but since the cafe up town had closed due to a funeral, he treated me to a "hobo" meal of bologna and cheese and a coke at the local grocery store. He said it was alright to take an early quit, since it was only 1:30 p.m. and I wasn't due to get off until 4:30 p.m., so I walked out the door, locked up the old depot for the last time and got in my car to drive away.

Just as I was about to leave, the signal maintainer had climbed up the train order signal mast and I watched as he removed the semaphores and dropped them on the platform, which broke them all up. What a shame I thought, as I would have liked to have had them for my railroad collection. I drove off to St. John, Kansas, that night and in the wee hours of the morning caught No. 23, the Grand Canyon, for a weeks vacation in California, but that is another story.
WHO BUILT THE ENGINES?

Part 7 - The Schenectady Locomotive Works

by: Gene Hull

The Schenectady Locomotive Engine Manufactory Company was formed in 1848 by John Ellis and Platt Potter at Schenectady, New York. The Norris & Sons firm at Philadelphia furnished the tools and knowledge. Their first locomotive was the famous LIGHTNING.

After a bit of financial trouble, the company was reorganized in 1851 as the Schenectady Locomotive Works by John Ellis. Walter McQueen, a fine mechanical engineer, became vice president until he died in 1893. His engines were held in high esteem.

After John Ellis' death in 1864, but his family operated the factory until it merged with American Locomotive Company in 1901.
WHO BUILT THE ENGINES?

Part 8 - The Cooke & Danforth Locomotive and Machine Co.

by: Gene Hull

Charles Danforth operated a plant to manufacture textile machinery at Paterson, New Jersey. In 1852, Danforth joined with John Cooke, a patternmaker, and they formed Danforth, Cooke & Company to manufacture steam locomotives.

Cooke was an expert engine builder. After his death his family kept active control of the company. It was well known for excellent quality of steam locomotives and steam powered rotary snowplows. The plat became part of American Locomotive company in 1901.
The ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB is a non-profit organization of railroad and train enthusiasts that was formed in 1969. We are also the Little Rock Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. We meet on the second Sundays of most months at 2 p.m. Anyone interested in trains is welcome!

Dues to join the ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB are currently $20 a year, which includes the monthly Arkansas Railroader newsletter. If you’d like to join the NRHS through our club (thus being a member of the Little Rock Chapter NRHS and national NRHS), you must pay $20 a year more, bringing the total to $40 a year for both. Dues are always payable on January 1st of each year, but you may pay at any time (membership will extend through the following year).

To join or renew, send your name, address and phone number plus dues to the ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB, PO BOX 9151, NORTH LITTLE ROCK AR 72119. Call 501-758-1340 for information. The newsletter editor’s email address is: trains@trainweather.com The Arkansas Railroader is put on the Web monthly, and that address is: http://www.trainweather.com

The next program and meeting of the Arkansas Railroad Club will be held Sunday, March 13, 2005 at our usual site, Pulaski Heights Presbyterian Church, 4401 Woodlawn Drive, Little Rock. Time will be 2 p.m. The program will be presented by Jimmy Christenberry of Mt. Ida, AR. Jimmy has an extensive slide collection and will be showing Frisco, KCS and Santa Fe slides from the ’60s through the ’80s. He has worked for the KCS as a locomotive engineer and also worked for the Frisco, BN and for one day, the Soo Line. He has some great shots not just from a railfan's perspective, but also from an engineer's view.

Looking ahead: Darin Archer, a Union Pacific Special Agent, will be giving the April program. And Mike Condren from Memphis is lined up to do the May show. He mentioned something about the program he would like to do, but nothing definitive. Possibly some Memphis RR history. Looks like November may be at the recently restored Bald Knob depot, but is yet to be determined. On Saturday, April 30, we again plan on going to Memphis as a group to ride their trolley system and other things. (Thanks to VP Mark Silverberg for getting these programs lined up)

TROLLEY FOOD FOR THOUGHT - Bill Pollard had this question: The trolley coverage in the Railroader (re. different colors) got me thinking. From the pictures in the book “Southern States Trolleys” -- it does appear that the color was an attractive green and white. Wonder if CAT might consider replicating that scheme on one of the additional trolleys now on order? Another question.... have you even seen any discussion of the specific routes used by the trolley buses which replaced the trolleys in 1947, continuing until about 1956? I have some vague recollection of those, from shopping in downtown Little Rock, and in helping Mike Condren with his Memphis History websites, have gotten interested in the Little Rock operation.

2005 ROSTERS AVAILABLE - I made a 2005 roster of Arkansas Railroad Club members and 2004 members who have not yet renewed. These are only for those who paid their 2005 dues, so if you didn’t pick one up at the February

Arkansas Railroader - Little Rock Chapter NRHS
meeting, let me know if you want one mailed to you. Email me (trains@trainweather.com) or mail the club at PO Box 9151, North Little Rock AR 72119.

WANTED: FOR SALE OR TRADE

The following is for those who want to find certain railroad-related items, information, or want to sell or trade such items with other railfans. We reserve the right to refuse listings if deemed inappropriate. The Arkansas Railroad Club is not responsible for misleading ads.

WANTED -- Dispatcher train sheets, 1950-1970, covering any Mopac or Rock Island trackage in Arkansas. Particularly need MP Central Division sheets for any date prior to April 1960. Buying single sheets or in quantity. Also interested in other pre-1970 RR paper (morning reports, conductor timebooks, trainmaster work sheets, car inspector files, etc.) which show passenger train consists from the same roads and area. Bill Pollard (501-327-7083 evenings; or email: arkrail@arkansas.net)

WANTED – Information on the June 16, 1942 Missouri Pacific wreck of a troop train and switch engine in Malvern, Arkansas. Call Tom Beam of Hot Springs, 501-760-1116. Mr. Beam will try to attend our February 13 meeting.

RAILROAD ABANDONMENT PROPOSALS

The address of the Surface Transportation Board is: Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, Washington DC 20423. The STB phone number for abandonment procedures (Office of Public Services) is: 202-565-1592. If you contact them, it would be handy to use the Docket Numbers. Their Web address is: http://www.stb.dot.gov if you'd like the complete listings.

These abandonment proposals have been printed in the Federal Register or have come directly from the Surface Transportation Board. They will go in effect unless one of the following occurs: 1) an offer of financial assistance is received; 2) a request for public use of the land is received (for instance, rails-to-trails); 3) petitions to reopen the case is filed. Railroads, before they can file these "notices of exemption under CFR 1152 Subpart F," must certify that 1) no local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; 2) any overhead traffic can be routed over other lines; 3) no formal complaint filed by a user is pending and; 4) environmental reports, historic reports, transmittal letter, newspaper publication, and notice to governmental agencies have been met. Even though approval is granted for the railroads to abandon, it may be months or years before track is actually taken up.

NEW JERSEY – NORFOLK SOUTHERN
- To discontinue service over a 10.0-mile line of railroad between milepost WD-2.2 in Newark, NJ, and milepost WD-8.4 in Kearny, NJ (which is a segment of a branch line known as the Boonton line), and between milepost NK-4.3 and milepost NK-8.1 on the adjacent Newark Industrial Track in Essex and Hudson Counties, NJ. Effective on February 17, 2005. (STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 242X, decided January 7, served January 18, 2005)

TENNESSEE – TENNESSEE RAILWAY COMPANY
- To abandon a 14.04-mile line of railroad between milepost TE-27.96 at Nick's Creek and milepost TE-42.00 at Devonia, in Anderson and Campbell Counties, TN. Effective on February 18, 2005. (STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 259X, decided January 11, served January 19, 2005)

INDIANA – NORFOLK SOUTHERN RAILWAY CO.
- To abandon an 8.60-mile line of railroad between milepost RK-130.00 at Converse, and milepost RK-138.60 at Hartford City, in Blackford County, IN. Effective on February 18, 2005. (STB Docket No. AB-290 (Sub-No. 257X, decided January 12, served January 19, 2005)

NORTH DAKOTA – BNSF
- To abandon and discontinuance of service over a 8.00-mile line of railroad between BNSF milepost 0.00 near Sanborn, and milepost 8.00, near Rogers, in Barnes County, ND. Effective on February 23, 2005. (STB Docket No. AB-6 (Sub-No. 427X, decided January 14, served January 24, 2005)

MISSOURI - RAILROAD SWITCHING SERVICE OF MISSOURI, INC.
- To abandon its entire line of railroad extending from a point of connection with Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NS) at or near Broad Street (milepost 0) to terminus at the publishing facility of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (milepost 1.89), a distance of 1.89 miles, in St. Louis, St. Louis County, MO. The line includes the station of St. Louis. A final decision will be issued by May 2, 2005. (STB Docket No. AB-792X, decided January 26, served February 1, 2005)
KCS TO PURCHASE 30 NEW LOCOMOTIVES

KCSR will purchase 30 new SD70ACe locomotives from the Electro-Motive Division of General Motors Corporation (GM) to be delivered in fourth quarter 2005. In 2004, GM offered KCSR a 75-day, free trial of two, new SD70ACe locomotives. The same demonstration units will be returned to KCSR in January at no charge and be returned back to GM upon delivery of the new units. The primary benefit of the new SD70ACe is that it can pull 9.6 percent more 110-ton coal cars than any of the locomotives currently in KCSR's fleet. (January 26, 2005 news story)

NO SMOKING AT UNION PACIFIC

Union Pacific Corp. began rejecting smokers' applications in Texas, Idaho, Tennessee, Arkansas, Washington state, Arizona and parts of Kansas and Nebraska last year and hopes to add more states. On July 1, it will make all Union Pacific property smoke-free, including trains, a policy that now applies only to its company headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska. Public affairs director John Bromley said the company estimates it will save $922 annually for each position it fills with a nonsmoker over one who smokes. It hired 5,500 new workers last year and plans to hire 700 this year. About a quarter of the company's 48,000 employees now smoke, and Bromley said it's clear they cost the company more money.

"Looking at our safety records, (we know that) people who smoke seem to have higher accident rates than nonsmokers," he said. "It's no secret that people who smoke have more health issues than nonsmokers." (Feb 3, 2005)

KCS POSTS RECORD REVENUES

Kansas City Southern Railway (KCSR) had record revenues of $173.7 million in the fourth quarter of 2004, up 17.6%. KCSR also posted record operating income of $31.7 million in the quarter along with an operating ratio of 81.8% vs. 86.9% in the prior year's quarter. For all of 2004, KCSR revenues added up to a record $639.5 million, an increase of 120% over 2003. The operating for the year was 84.1% vs. 88.6% in 2003

FREIGHT CAR DELIVERIES UP

Economic Planning Associates is projecting annual freight car deliveries in the 55,000-to—60,000 range through the year 2010. EPA estimates that 58,850 new cars will be built in 2005, compared with 46,871 in 2004 and 32,180 in 2003. Deliveries are projected at 59,100 in 2006, 57,350 in 2007, 54,850 in 2008, 57,850 in 2009, and 59,600 in 2010.

1851 RAILROAD STRUCTURE TO BE DESTROYED

(Prichard/Whistler, Alabama) - The 1851 Mobile and Ohio Railroad machine shop in Prichard, Alabama in the Whistler community has been scheduled to be destroyed due to being is really bad shape. It was built before the Civil War in the community where Casey Jones once lived and was baptized in a local Catholic Church. The town had once tried to make it into a railroad tourist attraction, but didn’t have the money to do it.

Large beams of old pine posts, 12 x 12, shaped with fitted joints, show the craftsmanship of whoever built it before the Civil War. Several hundred thousand light-peach-colored bricks, which are larger than standard bricks, sit salvaged near the remains of the building. There were five bricked self-supporting arches that used to stand on the spot in Whistler near the corner of Main and Wasson streets. Now vines grow to the top of a two-storied corner of the former building. Railroad tracks that flanked the machine shop are not used anymore and are covered with dry, brown grass. The 15,000-square-foot structure was used at one time as a resin plant.

The machine shop's home for more than 150 years, Whistler is the oldest part of Prichard and was a thriving community before the city incorporated in 1925. About 100 residential structures date back to the 1800s. Many of the streets there still exist in the pattern in which they were laid out when the community was founded. (Tuscaloosa News, February 8, 2005)
NEW BNSF LOGO
On January 24, 2005, BNSF Railway introduced a new corporate and rail subsidiary logo and a new name for the company. The new logo was unveiled when Matt Rose, BNSF chairman, president and CEO, and other members of the Executive Team participated in the New York Stock Exchange closing bell ceremony. The new subsidiary name will be BNSF Railway Company; the holding company remains Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation.

AMTRAK NEWS

ZERO SUBSIDY FOR AMTRAK
The buzz this month is the zeroing out in the Federal budget of Amtrak's long distance networked trains, such as the Texas Eagle. The budget will offer $360 million for maintenance on the flagship Northeast Corridor between Washington and Boston -- which Amtrak owns -- and for commuter services. The proposal must be approved by Congress and the political fight is on to save passenger trains in much of the country. Amtrak is popular, not only with the public saying in polls that they support Federal subsidies for Amtrak, but also popular with both Democrats and Republicans in Congress. Amtrak employs 22,000 people and operates 265 trains a day, excluding commuter service, in 46 states. Remember in the mid 1980s to early 90s that both Presidents Reagan and Bush, Sr also zeroed out Amtrak.

Amtrak, under President and CEO David L. Gunn, has experienced more reform in the past two-and-a-half years than probably in the previous thirty. Headcount has dropped by 3,900. Meanwhile, the number of daily trains has risen from 265 in 2002 to 300 today.

Here are some points I read or came up with regarding some myths about Amtrak. Any thoughts or corrections welcomed. (Ken Ziegenbein)

AMTRAK FACTS VS MYTHS

1) MYTH - Passenger trains run empty. FACT - In 2004 Amtrak’s nationwide passenger trains carried a record 25 million people - hundreds are onboard most trains, including the Texas Eagle that comes through Arkansas late at night. Add to these numbers the over 60 million commuters carried by Amtrak between the major cities of California and the Northeast. Overall, in 2004, ridership on Amtrak's national network trains was up 3.3%, and ridership on the Texas Eagle for the same period was up 9.5 percent.

2) MYTH - Taxpayers don’t subsidize roads and airports, only passenger trains. FACT - Airlines, private motorists, bus lines, trucking companies, and shipping companies all use taxpayer financed infrastructures. Railroads provide their own infrastructure entirely at their own expense. Amtrak must then pay rent to the private railroads to use their tracks.

3) MYTH - It’d be cheaper for the taxpayer to buy a one-way ticket on an airline than to pay for a Amtrak train ticket. FACT - For every dollar the airlines make in profits, taxpayers spend three to maintain the aviation infrastructure, including non-user fees such as the Air Traffic Control system and taxes to pay for police and roads to the airports. So, if you buy an airline ticket for $100, taxpayers have to pay $200 more to keep the system of airports and traffic control running.

4) FACT - Airports, highways and waterways are owned by public agencies that do NOT pay property taxes. Railroads pay property taxes on hundreds of thousands of miles of right of way. Railroads also pay fuel taxes that are used for highways.

5) MYTH - The public doesn’t want to subsidize passenger trains. FACT - A 1997 Gallup poll showed that 69% of Americans want the federal government to continue funding for Amtrak. A December 2000 survey conducted for the U.S. Conference of Mayors showed 82% of Americans believe the federal government has ample resources to fund Amtrak. An August 2002 Washington Post poll showed 71% of Americans support federal funding for Amtrak. An MSNBC unscientific poll on their web site on February 11, 2005 asked if the federal government should help fund Amtrak - 63 percent said Yes, 37 percent No. Why don’t our leaders in the nation’s capitol listen to these people?

6) FACT - Air traffic control is provided by the federal government at taxpayer expense. Railroad traffic is controlled and paid for by private freight companies. State Police who patrol highways are funded by taxpayers. Amtrak has its own police force that is funded with ticket revenue. Each year the federal government spends about $31 billion on highways, $19 billion on aviation, but...
just a billion on passenger rail. (Taxpayers spend 2.8 times as much money to spread salt on icy roads as they spend on Amtrak’s entire national system).

7) MYTH - Highways pay for themselves through user fees. FACT - In 2001, 41% of funding for highways came from non-highway-user fee sources (property taxes, bonds, sales taxes, general funds, other taxes and fees), according to the Brookings Institution’s Series on Transportation Reform (April 2003). Most county and city roads are paid for by property or sales taxes, whether you use the roads or not.

8) FACT - In a June 27, 2003 conference on traffic congestion, American Public Transportation Association President William Millar stated: "Since 1995, transit ridership has grown by 21 percent, versus 16 percent for driving and 12 percent for domestic airlines. More people are taking public transportation now than in the last 40 years."

9) FACT - The U.S. government established trust funds for highways and aviation to provide a secure stream of funding to meet their capital and operating needs and allow for long-term planning. No dedicated funding has been established for passenger rail despite the compelling logic for doing so and despite the fact that the public overwhelmingly supports passenger rail. Why not a “Passenger Rail Trust Fund”? If Amtrak had the same opportunity to receive Federal infrastructure investments as highway and aviation interests, with a federal match comparable to funds available to those kinds of transportation, many more communities would avail themselves of passenger rail service.

10) THE PROFIT DOUBLE STANDARD - Many think passenger rail has to make a profit but roads, cars, airports, waterways never are asked to be profitable. When was the last time Interstate 40 made a profit? Why don’t we say ‘money losing roads’? When did your private automobile ever make a profit? Unless you rent it out or run a private taxi service, your car is a BIG Money-Loser - you have to pay continuously to run it. Sure, it takes you to work, but you have to ‘pay it’ to do so. So why do some always think passenger trains/Amtrak need to be profitable? Sounds like a double standard to me.

11) MYTH - Most people ride long distant trains from end point to end point. FACT - Most Amtrak passengers ride between the many smaller cities and towns located between major end points and don’t go all the way to the end of the line. For instance, Amtrak’s Texas Eagle carries many people from Bloomington, Illinois to Longview, Texas and between Marshall, Texas and Little Rock, plus all sorts of other city pair combinations. Most don’t ride all the way from Chicago to Los Angeles (do you drive all the way to Los Angeles every time you get on I-40 in North Little Rock? Of course not. You just go to Conway or Russellville or other cities on the highway). Also, most of the hundreds of these smaller towns don’t have airline or bus services, either. So, in essence Amtrak is a network of smaller town to town stations, not a cross-country carrier from one large city to another. As such, it can’t directly be compared with airlines.

ACTIVITIES OF OTHER RAIL GROUPS

RAIL SUPPORT MEETING IN FORT WORTH MARCH 12 - Charter member Bill Pollard sent me the following announcement. Several of us from Arkansas attend annually:

The Region 9 (AR-TX-MO-KS-OK) annual meeting of the National Association of Railroad Passengers will be held in the Intermodal Transportation Center (Amtrak-TRE station) in Fort Worth, on Saturday March 12. Advance registration is $25.00/person which includes lunch. Participants are encouraged to arrive Friday -- there will be a tour of Trinity Railway Express shop facilities Friday afternoon, and all participants are invited to a group dinner on Friday night. For those participating in the shop tour, meeting registration does not include cost of bus shuttle to the shops from nearest TRE station (estimated at $3 to $5/person.) Persons arriving in Dallas on #21 and planning to take the shop tour will transfer at Dallas Union Station to a TRE train, rather than taking Amtrak to Ft. Worth.

Speakers at the meeting on Saturday will include Amtrak officials, representatives of the developing corridors, and representatives working to keep the Heartland Flyer (Fort Worth-Oklahoma City) operating past the current funding deadline of September 30, 2005. George Chilson, who was elected NARP President in 2004, will also provide an overview of the current Amtrak funding and political situation.

The meeting will conclude by 3pm Saturday, so that those wishing to return home Saturday on the Texas Eagles or the Heartland Flyer can do so without the expense of a second night’s hotel stay. The meeting is open to anyone interested in seeing more trains and preserving our existing service -- it is NOT necessary to be a member of NARP or TxARP to attend. Texas has recently created several passenger rail-corridor districts, and there is growing interest in developing passenger service in Texas -- this interest will likely expand to Arkansas in the future as markets in Memphis and St. Louis are identified, so participation from Arkansas in this meeting is encouraged. Participants should mail registration fee to Ray Dunbar, P.O. Box 5165, Longview TX 75608. Indicate
whether you wish to participate in the TRE shop tour and/or the pre-meeting dinner on Friday night. Confirmation notices will NOT be mailed out; your cancelled check is your receipt. Include email address if you wish email confirmation of receipt.

**PINE BLUFF - SATURDAY APRIL 2, 2005** - The Cotton Belt Rail Historical Society will be having their annual Railroadiana and Model Train Show at the Arkansas Railroad Museum in Pine Bluff, Hwy 65B and Port Road. It will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is $4. For more information, contact Darrel Cason, PO Box 2044, Pine Bluff AR 71613, 870-536-1229.

---

To join/renew membership in the Arkansas Railroad Club (Little Rock Chapter National Railway Historical Society), fill out the form below. **Annual dues are $20** for local dues (plus $20 for the national NRHS dues if you want to join the NRHS through our chapter, a total of $40 for both local and national dues). Send to: Arkansas Railroad Club, PO Box 9151, North Little Rock AR 72119.

**NAME** _________________________________________________________________________________________________________

**ADDRESS** ______________________________________________________________________________________________________

**CITY** __________________________ STATE _____ ZIP __________________

**PHONE** ______________________ EMAIL ________________________________________

Send check, made out to the Arkansas Railroad Club, PO Box 9151, North Little Rock AR 72119. Call 501-758-1340 for more information or visit us on the web at [http://www.trainweather.com](http://www.trainweather.com) and click on **Arkansas Railroader**. Our email is trains@trainweather.com.

---

The Federal Railroad Administration is now requiring all freight cars to eventually have reflective stripes to aid in their visibility at night. Here is one tank car with those new stripes. All new freight cars will have these stripes and they will be put on older cars during maintenance. **(John C. Jones photo)**

---

**Arkansas Railroader - Little Rock Chapter NRHS**
The Little Rock/North Little Rock River Rail Trolley system had its 50,000th rider about 12:30 p.m. on Friday, February 11, 2005. Elaine Myers won a year-long pass plus a River Market gift certificate for being the 50,000th rider. She was on the North Little Rock trolley. At the same time, I was on the Little Rock south loop trolley, so I guess I came pretty close to being that 50,000th rider. Oh well. (Ken Ziegenbein)