



LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Arkansas Railroader



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W. A. (BILL) MERCK EDITOR

October Program: We should have another interesting one. TRACTION will be the theme of this one and will be presented jointly by Boyd Pyle, Bud Garrison and Fred Fillers. One particular part of the program will be on the old Little Rock streetcar system. Am sure many of the oldtimers in our club will remember this system. The date is Sunday the 14th starting at 2 PM at the Missouri Pacific building in North Little Rock. Trust we can have a good attendance and bring those visitors.

Thought you might be interested in that your editor recently had an appointment announcement from the University Of Texas at Austin to the effect that our good associate member, Dr. James R. Fair, formerly of St. Louis, will fill The Virginia and Ernest Cockrell Jr. Chair of the College of Engineering, Department of Chemical Engineering, effective Sept. 1st. Jim, as you know, is the author of that best seller, "The North Arkansas Line". Congratulations Jim.

Thanks to Walter Walker, am typing this newsletter on his electric portable. I am totally unused to an electric but this one is very nice. My old portable "mill" (railroad slang for typewriter) is on the bum and badly needs an overhaul. You will no doubt discover many errors in the letter; forgive me but I need to get used to this electric.

RAILROAD SHOW - HOLIDAY INN - JACKSON, TENN.
SATURDAY, OCT. 20 - 10 AM--4 PM.

The above show will be presented by the Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Historical Society, Inc. Admission to the show is free and there will be many tables of railroad "goodies" for sale.

HICKS FLEA MARKET - MEMPHIS, TENN.
SATURDAY, OCT. 20 AND SUNDAY, OCT. 21

The above will be another big one. This particular flea market occupies three buildings at the Fair Grounds in Memphis. Some railroad "goodies" for sale almost guaranteed.

Can't think of a better way to spend a weekend than to take in both of the above. Can you??

The poem reproduced below was sent to your editor by Jim Bennett.

ON THE BLINDS OF THE OLD LONE STAR---- By M.L.Mainer
(as told to Charles D. Dulin)

1

When I was a 'bo in the 20s or so
I traveled a lot on the trains;
On fast and slow freights I covered the states
On branch lines and rip-roaring mains.
I'm dreaming today of those long rights of way
That called the old 'bo from afar,
But mostly I feel those ribbons of steel
From the blinds of the old LONE STAR.

2

How often I've felt, on the old Cotton Belt,
The joys of the good old days
When I hoboed the trails of the ballast and rails
And visited telegraph bays!
I tell you some how I sense it all now,
The speed and the zip of the breeze
That fluttered my pants like a Mexican dance
And whined like a bucket of bees.

3

But now you can't know, however you go,
The thrills I'm reliving in rhyme;
Back there yet so near to the STAR'S engineer
Who ran a tight schedule on time.
In MY time, of course, steam, hoboes and Morse
Were as common as radios are,
So it's hard to portray how it was in my day
On the blinds of the old LONE STAR.

4

Now, boys, when I'm gone and my spirit lives on
I think that you're going to find
That the LONE STAR is back--that she's there on the track
And that I'm again on the blind.
And then I just know that her whistle will blow
When steam rushes into her veins
And that she will race to that beautiful place
Where 'bos can again ride the trains.

I consider it a privileged honor to be credited with the writing
of this poem by the Author-Poet and friend Mr. Charled D. Dulin
who composed it from memory of hobo stories told him by M.Mainer

FROM: THE COAL BUCKET - HORSESHOE CURVE CHAPTER, NRHS, ALTOONA, PA.

Amtrak Woes: An anonymous Amtrak employee (union member) contributed the following to Rail Travel News:

The Empire Builder was delayed by a freight train. He asked a trainman: "Do you think someone will be chewed out for this?" The reply: "Nah, nobody cares about this anymore." I am an Amtrak employee and I witness daily the truth that the trainman said: nobody cares. Certainly there are people at Amtrak who care about how the trains operate, but they are a minority. I cite the following examples:

- 1) The older on-board service employees in Chicago consider Amtrak a joke. They have seen good trains such as the Empire Builder and Super Chief reduced to rolling junkyards.
- 2) Train #6 is held 30 minutes at Granger, Wyoming. The conductor calls the dispatcher who replies: "Oh, sorry. I forgot about you." (Needless to say, the dispatcher probably wasn't fired or reprimanded.)
- 3) Train #41 is held 50 minutes at Harrisburg awaiting diesel power. It seems that the Conrail enginehouse, which had 32 hours to service the engines, could not have them ready on time.
- 4) Amtrak promised better car maintenance when they controlled the yards. In fact, the opposite is true. When Amtrak took control of 21st Street in Chicago and 8th Street in Los Angeles from the Santa Fe, running maintenance all but collapsed. Trains 1-2, 3-4, and 15-16 have never looked so bad.
- 5) On any given morning at 6 a.m. you can stroll into Sunnyside Yards in New York and find at least half of the third shift maintenance workers sleeping.
- 6) In Oakland an SP maintenance worker paints truck frames and car underbodies a shiny black, but the lounge car on #6 departs with no water, no generator shaft to provide lighting, and opaque Lexan windows.

I am saying quite simply that if Amtrak were run like a business in which profit was the objective, at least 50% of Amtrak's management and union employees would be fired for non-productivity and gross incompetence. Amtrak can no longer fall back on such excuses as "old equipment", "no parts", "untrained labor", et c. Even the new Amfleet cars are not properly maintained. IBM or GM would have fired this bunch of unemployables and would have found people who could do the job. (from The 470) //

You may or may not Agree with the above. We offer no comment.

THE TRAINMASTER - PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER - PORTLAND, OREGON

They advise it is their understanding that Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus, in addition to their Red and Blue Unit trains now have added a third circus train to their fleet, known as the GOLD UNIT.

Before you receive this newsletter, the Arkansas Association Of Railroad Passengers, in connection with HOGTRAIN, will have operated another Univ. Of Ark. football special with Amtrak, to the Ark-TCU game at Ft. Worth, Texas on October 6th. \$115 perperson (Dbl.Occup). Extra cars will be added to the Inter-American on Friday nite October 5th. Sounds mighty nice; just wish we could go on this one.

As of this writing the Rock Island is still on strike. Some trains have been operated by supervisory personnel; however here in Arkansas such trains have been few and far between. We would not want to comment on what will be done with "The Rock"; apparently from newspaper, TV and radio reports, it will be sold in segments to other railroads. Very sad on what was once a very fine railroad.

ARKANSAS STATE FAIR MINUS ROYAL AMERICAN: For the first time since the early forties, Royal American Shows will not be at the Arkansas State Fair at Little Rock, which opened on September 28th. Your editor always got a kick out of watching the two long colorful trains of this show roll into Little Rock for the fair. Understand the midway at the fair is a poor substitute for Royal American. The big show may be the last rail carnival on the road; although we have heard of another one with the name of "World Of Mirth" of something like that. This however cannot be confirmed: If you have additional information let me know.

Jim Bennett reports he spotted a Sperry Rail car working Cotton Belt main line a week or two ago. Jim managed to snap a few photos of the car which should make interesting photos. They were taken at Stuttgart.

On September 9th, the date of our September meeting, Naomi and Gene Hull were taking off for another trip to our westernmost regions, including Colorado, New Mexico and perhaps Oregon and Washington, exploring abandoned narrow gauge rail roadbeds. We expect an interesting report from this fine couple on their return and perhaps some good slides??

Thanks to you members who have sent me self addressed stamped envelopes to mail the newsletter. This certainly will help with the postage which is a big expense these days. To our other members who have not sent them; let them come to me when you can. Every little bit helps. (The long lines you see in the newsletter is not the fault of this typewriter but of your editor.) I cannot get used to this electric. My railroad employers never furnished me with an electric and I used a manual, mostly Underwoods, for nearly forty years.

Want to take this opportunity to thank many of you for cards, etc., on the recent illness of my wife, Lella Mae. She is home from the hospital and seems to be on the road to recovery. Thanks again.

Hope to see all of you at the October meeting.

The Arkansas Railroad Club is a non-profit organization. Regular meetings held on second Sunday of each month with exception of July and December. Visitors always welcome and refreshments usually available. Send all news items and exchange newsletters to Editor at 5007 Hawthorne Road, Little Rock, Ark. 72207.
