



Arkansas Railroader



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W. A. "BILL" MERCK EDITOR

OCTOBER MEETING AND PROGRAM; Our meeting for this month will be on Sunday the 12th starting time 2 PM at the Missouri Pacific office building in North Little Rock. The program will be given by President Bill Pollard who will show some Amtrak publicity slides. This should be another interesting program and trust we will have another good attendance. Bring those visitors and lets fill up the room again.

Congratulations are in order to Bill Bailey for chairing our big swap-sale show at the Holiday Inn at North Little Rock on September 27th. Paid admissions totaled 238 people; 34 tables were sold and the total attendance which included the dealers was 325 people. It was clear even before the show opened that the room we had would not take care of all reservations and several had to be turned down. It was the club's first event of this kind and plans are already underway for a bigger one next year and of course a larger room. It was just great and most dealers there told us they planned on coming back next year.

NEWS RELEASE FROM TRAINS MAGAZINE (Quoted in part)

"The November issue of TRAINS magazine marks the publication's 40th anniversary. To celebrate TRAINS has put together a record-setting 88 pages featuring specially-chosen content and an 8-page full-color section. This is only the second time in the history of the magazine that a photo section has featured color photos exclusively.

The November 1980 special anniversary issue of TRAINS will become a collector's item, both for its content and for its significance in marking TRAINS' 40th year as the magazine of railroading. (Editor's Note)--By the time this newsletter reaches you no doubt you will already have your copy of TRAINS as it will be available in hobby shops and on newsstands in early October.

SHORT QUIZ

Below are listed a few towns in Arkansas picked at random that are no longer served by rail. Can you name the railroad that served them? This should be an easy one for our oldtimers (which includes me). Answers on Page 2.

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|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Griffithville | 11. New Blaine |
| 2. Hampton | 12. McCormick |
| 3. Combs | 13. Cash |
| 4. Lonsdale | 14. Coy |
| 5. Slovac | 15. St. Paul |
| 6. West Point | 16. Tollville |
| 7. Auvergne | 17. Prairie Grove |
| 8. Scranton | 18. Waldstein |
| 9. Sparkman | 19. Forrester |
| 10. Success | 20. Star City |

ANSWERS TO QUIZ ON PAGE 1

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|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Rock Island | 6. M&NA/M&A | 11. FtS. & R.I. | 16. Rock Island |
| 2. Thornton & Alexandria | 7. Rock Island | 12. CottonBelt | 17. Frisco |
| 3. Frisco | 8. FtS.S. & RI. | 13. Frisco | 18. Cotton Belt |
| 4. MissouriPacific | 9. Rock Island | 14. Cotton Belt | 19. KCS |
| 5. Cotton Belt | 10. Frisco | 15. Frisco | 20. Arkansas R.R. |

HOGTRAIN - ARKANSAS Vs. HOUSTON - OCTOBER 24-26.

Price includes roundtrip railfare, two nights at the ASIRO VILLAGE MOTEL, (directly across from the Astrodome and Astroworld), all transfers, and game tickets. \$190.00 per person, (double occupancy) If interested contact Bill Pollard or call 565-4056 or write 8615 Chicot Road, LR. AR 72209. This sounds interesting and feel sure that the train will have a crowd. With football fever demonstrated by Razorback fans the train could very well be a sell-out.

Below is quoted an interesting item from THE BULLETIN BOARD, newsletter of the Trinity Valley Railroad Club, Inc., Ft. Worth, Texas, September issue:

"For approximately 4 weeks beginning September 8, the south bound InterAmerican, Number 21, will detour on the Cotton Belt from Texarkana to Big Sandy. This will occur Monday-Friday only due to heavy track work in program on the MoPAC during day light hours between Texarkana and Marshall. This would be a good opportunity to ride the Cotton Belt in the daytime. One option is to take a roundtrip to Little Rock (70.00). This would involve a 1 AM to 5:45 AM layover, but the station is open all night. Another way would be to bus (gag) to Texarkana and AMTRAK back (26.50). but you would have to get there by 8:27 AM."

Your Editor does not like to criticize editors of other rail club publications but one that rather, shall we say "teed me off" happens to be in Texas and will not publish any names nor the name of the club newsletter, etc. It happens that this editor took off on a harangue about the S.P. being responsible for the bankruptcy of the Rock Island by the establishment many years ago of the SSW-SP fast freight route from St. Louis to the west coast. Apparently this editor never heard of the word COMPETITION, which is the name of the game in the railroad industry. This route was established while the Rock Island was still a solvent railroad and very much in competition with other routes to the west coast. When the S.P. assumed control of the Cotton Belt they knew they had a real prize and they were not going to "sit on their laurels" so to speak. Also, the editor took off on a spiel about the S.P. not wanting passenger trains, etc. This is getting to be "old hat". The S.P. is running a lot of Amtrak trains, in fact more than some other railroads I can name. It all boils down to this--with the exception of some tourist operations like Southern Ry. etc. do you know of any railroad in this day and time that really wants to operate passenger trains? You know the answer to that one. It seems that a lot of rail club news editors take a delight in picking on the S.P. As a long time freight traffic representative I never low rated my competitors and I do not intend to do it as editor of this newsletter. Even though rail competition is still with us, all lines should work together in many ways and if ever the time has come when it needs to be done NOW is the time.

SOME LATE MERGER NEWS: Merger talk is still very much with us. The S.P. and ATSF have, so it seems, broken off negotiations. They may try again who knows. UP-MP-WP is still very much on and may actually take place. BN-FRISCO still in Federal court. Business cars of the Frisco have already been painted the traditional BN green but no lettering, awaiting the outcome of the court decision. The Little Rock and Western, a wholly owned subsidiary of Arkansas Kraft Corporation, submitted a proposal to buy the bankrupt Rock Island property from Little Rock to Perry; however the purchase price is not satisfactory to the bankruptcy trustee, Williams Gibbons of Chicago. Also LR&W seeks to work out an agreement with Missouri Pacific to allow it to operate over about 13 miles of MOP track to connect with the Cotton Belt. Leo Crowley of Green Bay, Wisconsin, President of the LR&W says that his line has to be reassured of a connection with Cotton Belt since, as Crowley states, "the Cotton Belt serves a lot of our shipping points", and that his company is preparing a contract for MOP's approval.

MERGER NEWS CONTINUED: If BN-FRISCO and UP-MP-WP and SP-SSW (already merged) are approved do you know that this will leave only Class 1 line in the state left with independent status? Yep you guessed it--the KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN and it is our understanding that this line has no ambitions to merge with anyone. The line is trying to purchase some lines of the bankrupt Rock Island but this is different than merger. KCS doesn't need to merge with anyone; their traffic volume is high and as long as it is they do not intend to seek merger.

VAN NOY INTERSTATE-UNION NEWS: Say you old timers do you know whatever happened to these two companies? During the great passenger train era these two companies literally sold thousands of items on trains by news butches, including colorful folding brochures of passenger trains on the DRGW, SOUTHERN PACIFIC, SANTA FE and UNION PACIFIC. Since both companies were railroad related a history of both companies would probably make very interesting reading. Wonder if they are still around.

THE OLD NEWS BUTCH

By: Bill Merck

Do you remember the news agents on passenger trains back in the "golden era" of the passenger train? I do and although there were exceptions, my memory pictures the old news agent, commonly called "butches", as a somewhat seedy looking character with a week's growth of beard, a dirty white shirt and coat and trousers that had not been pressed in a month. He sold his wares in coaches and chair cars (do not believe he was ever allowed in Pullman sleepers). His wares consisted of chewing gum, Cracker Jack, candy bars, peanuts, cold drinks, shoe strings, razor blades, sewing needles, brochures, newspapers and always a supply of cheapie paper back books. Two of his best sellers in the old days were by a now unknown author named Thomas W. Jackson. These books were ON A SLOW TRAIN THRU ARKANSAS, and THRU MISSOURI ON A MULE, both including nothing but insults to the two states involved. Fortunately both books went out of print many years ago. The butch also sold a supply of cheapie comic books which were very sordid indeed. You sometimes wondered how these fellows kept body and soul together. There used to be one that fit the above description that worked on the MDP between Memphis and Little Rock; he sometimes looked like he had one too many and passengers wondered if he was not some kind of "half wit". I do not want to leave the impression that I am downgrading the old news butches; actually he was as much of a part of the crew of the old time passenger train as was the conductor, brakeman and porter. He had his "Day In The Sun" so to speak and he is gone but not forgotten. It is doubtful that attendants on modern day AMTRAK trains ever heard of a news butch, much less ever having seen one. Do not like to get too personal; but back when I was fresh out of high school a local railroad was advertising in the newspapers for men and boys to work on their trains as news agents. A friend of mine and myself nearly applied for one of these jobs but fortunately my Dad talked us out of it. I thought at the time it might be a way of starting my railroad career-Ha. Its a good thing he did as I never knew a news butch to get rich or advance to anything else. Did you?

E N D

ANOTHER ITEM ABOUT OUR BIG SHOW: Beverly A. Birk, Express Editor of THE RAILROADIANS EXPRESS, was at the show and showed your editor a Cotton Belt dining car plate broken in about seven or eight pieces. It nearly "broke my heart" to say the least. If it been all there I might have sold all my earthly possessions to acquire it. Too bad.

The Arkansas Railroad Club is a non-profit organization. Regular meetings (with some exceptions) are held on the second Sunday of each month. Members are encouraged to bring visitors who are always welcome. Refreshments are usually available courtesy of Carol Fite and Naomi Hull. Send all news items and exchange newsletters to Editor at 5007 Hawthorne Rd., Little Rock, AR. 72207.

See all of you at the October meeting.
