



LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER  
N.R.H.S.

# ARKANSAS RAILROADER



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**ICONS OF MODERN STEAM:** Union Pacific's Steve Lee, left, and Norfolk Southern's Carl Jensen, right, seen here standing beside one of the *Challenger's* water tenders as the Union Pacific steam excursion awaits departure from Palestine, Texas on Friday, June 9, 1995. NS discontinued their steam excursions in December of 1994, but UP continues this fine tradition. (Ken Ziegenbein photo)



*Donna Perkins and her 3-year-old son Dimmitt William (from Sheridan, Arkansas) aboard the dome-diner "Colorado Eagle" between Palestine and Houston, Texas on Friday, June 9, 1995. They were nearing the end of an epic 4-day journey from Little Rock to Houston aboard Union Pacific's "Challenger" streamlined train. The boy was exhausted from playing train all day. (Ken Ziegenbein photo)*

## **A BOY'S DREAM**

As remembered by Ken Ziegenbein

**T**his is a story about a little boy's exciting train ride from Little Rock to Houston - the entire four-day journey behind Union Pacific's *Challenger* steam engine!

It all started the afternoon of Monday, June 5, 1995. The *Challenger's* train of 23 streamlined cars was parked for display in North Little Rock on the business tracks behind the old dispatcher's office. Dimmitt

William Perkins, 3, was on his way to the Little Rock Zoo with his mother, Donna, when they came upon a large steam engine parked in North Little Rock. They went to investigate. (They were going to the zoo, partly to ride the zoo train)

After viewing the engine, they noticed that tickets were being sold in the concession car *Sherman Hill*. They came in and asked where the train was going (they had heard

nothing about it). We said Little Rock to Monroe, Louisiana and it got mentioned that we were also selling tickets from Monroe to Shreveport, Louisiana and from Palestine to Houston, Texas and that another group was selling the seats from Shreveport to Palestine.

Well, the lady's curiosity heightened. It seems they had to be in Houston Friday anyway and had tried to get tickets on Amtrak's *Texas Eagle* to Houston, but it wasn't going on Friday, only running three times a week. They had decided to fly.

Now, however, a whole new opportunity opened up for them to ride a train all the way from Little Rock to Houston, taking four days, but at least it was on a train. She asked about getting a through ticket. I said sure, but she'd have to get the ticket from Shreveport to Palestine from another group. Well, she had to talk it over with her husband first.

A little while later she came back, and after a little coaxing by Barton Jennings and myself she said O.K. to the through tickets. I called the Red River Valley Railroad Historical Society in Shreveport to reserve her tickets to be picked up there. We were all set - a trip to the zoo to ride the zoo train had turned into a four-day odyssey train ride to Houston behind the largest operating steam locomotive in the world!

The next morning at 8:10 a.m., we departed Little Rock for Monroe. The journey was under way! We didn't see much of Dimmitt William or his mother on this segment - we were all too busy. However, the 3-year-old became a real pal to the passengers. He'd occasionally run up and down the isles yelling "Whoo-Whoo-Whoo" - he was riding a train and wanted to be the engine. He was having a ball.

The trip from Monroe to Shreveport had many fewer people aboard, less than a hundred. We departed Monroe about 8:00 a.m., Wednesday June 7, with several groups from Monroe boarding. Dimmitt William again

pretended to be a locomotive. Arrival in Shreveport was about 3:30 p.m. (actually, we stopped way outside of town at Reisor, where U.P.'s yards are). It was hot at Reisor, with little in the way of shade available. It was here that Dimmitt William got a case of heat rash waiting for a taxi to take him and his mother to the hotel. They didn't know there would be no stations or shelters at many of the stops. Everything worked out O.K., however.

At Shreveport, we all stayed at the Holiday Inn downtown, next to many railroad tracks and next to where we'd depart for Palestine the next morning. Donna and Dimmitt William hadn't gotten their tickets yet, so I went over to the Shreveport group's table and picked it up for them (by now, John, Tammy, Barton and myself had vowed to look after these two and be sure they got to/from their hotels and the train O.K. - after all, none of us had any transportation either).

Departure from Shreveport's downtown riverfront was about 9:00 a.m., June 8, an hour late (apparently, the local crew bringing the cars - with diesels - from Reisor to downtown had trouble finding the place, and the riverfront tracks are rated at only 10 mph or less). This meant that everybody, including Dimmitt William, got hot again, this time BEFORE boarding. (Sure was nice getting on those wonderful, COOL, Union Pacific coaches!).

Little was seen of our two passengers on this segment - it was now out of our hands. Arrival in Palestine was about 2:30 p.m., again at a place where there was no shade and where it was hot. We tried to hold something over Dimmitt William's head to keep him from getting heat rash again while we worked out transportation. Palestine has no taxi service and the Ramada Inn, where Donna and her son were staying, could not find a driver to pick them up.

A local Good Samaritan from Palestine with a station wagon drove up and offered us a lift to our hotels. We got in, and everyone



finally made it to a resting place, after the third day of travel.

We left Palestine at 8:00 a.m., June 9, heading for Houston, boarding about 31 passengers. This time Donna and Dimmitt William reserved a dome seat. At his mother's urging, the boy again sounded his "Who-Who" up and down the dome car (probably so he could tire himself out and sleep that night - he was sleeping in his dome car seat, already, exhausted from his four-day ordeal).

Arrival in Houston was about 2:30 p.m., where Dimmitt William and his mother

were met by her husband. They offered to take some of us to one of the airports in town, but we were going to another airport out of their way, so we parted company.

The adventure of a lifetime had ended for a three-year-old boy, something he'll remember his entire life. How many people can say a trip to the zoo resulted in a four-day train ride behind a steam engine over freight-only railroad track? A boy's dream about trains turned out to be true. ~~1995~~

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## ODYSSEY OF STEAM - 1995

by: Ken Ziegenbein

From June 3rd through June 9th, 1995, a group of Arkansas Railroad Club members had a most enjoyable time helping run Union Pacific's southern steam tour featuring the *Challenger* steam engine #3985 (4-6-6-4). There were other people having an experience of a lifetime as well, including Donna Perkins and her 3-year-old son Dimmitt William who rode the train all the way from Little Rock to Houston, Texas (see previous story).

After months of selling tickets, advertising, telephone calls, etc., the time of reckoning was approaching, sort of like a child birth after nine months of pregnancy or the arrival of Christmas Day or a wedding day or a trip to the woodshed after being a naughty boy (you get the picture). The train (all 23 cars) was on its way from Cheyenne, Wyoming, leaving there May 27, just for us (well, maybe not entirely).

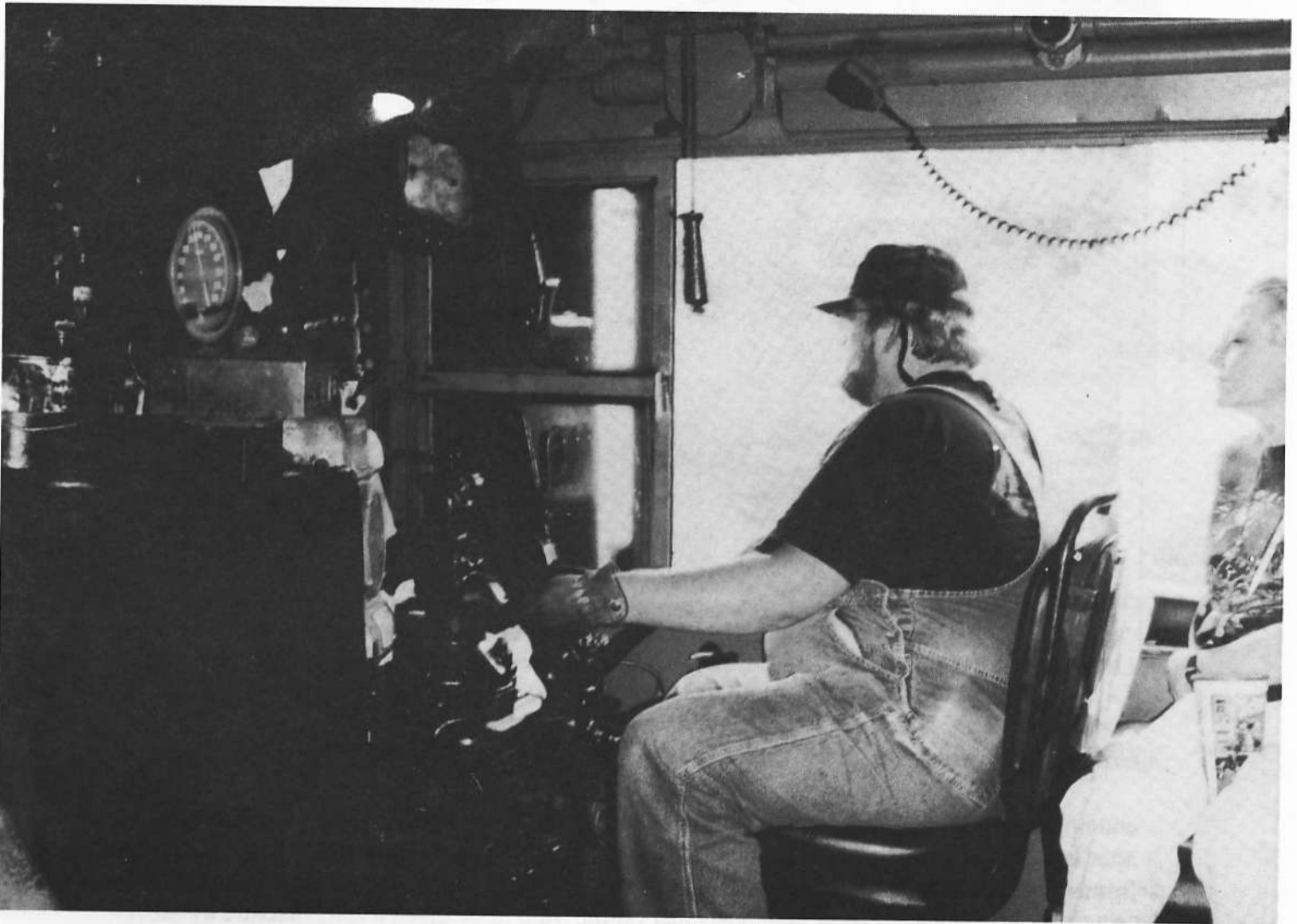
Due to flooding on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers in Missouri, the train entered Arkansas from the west on the former Arkansas Division tracks through Van Buren, after having come down from Kansas City through Parsons and Coffeyville, Kansas (former MKT tracks). Originally, the train was to have gone through Missouri from Kansas City to St Louis and be on display at the U.P. shops in Desoto on June 3.

Arrival in Van Buren on June 3 was at 3:35 p.m., a Saturday. A huge crowd was present. There from the Arkansas Railroad Club to greet it were myself, John and Tammy Hodkin, Matt and Sharon Ritchie and John Jones, among others. After spending the night in Van Buren, we

Arkansas Railroader

went to the U.P. yard about 7 a.m. June 4 to watch the activities and see the train off. A thunderstorm and heavy rain moved in about 7:30 a.m.. About 7:45 a.m. I walked over to Steve Lee, the Manager of Train Operating Practices of Union Pacific and the person operating the engine, and asked if I could ride the cab of the *Challenger* - he said O.K. if no others from the press wanted to.

No one else showed up, so I put my gloves and goggles on and inserted a pair of ear plugs and climbed aboard. Meanwhile, others from our club showed up to chase the train to North Little Rock, including Robin Thomas and Barton Jennings plus all the others.



*Aboard the Challenger running about 50 mph somewhere between Van Buren and Russellville, Arkansas on Sunday morning, June 4, 1995. Running the engine is Steve Lee, Manager of Train Operating Practices for Union Pacific. To his right is the engineer/pilot on this run, Bobbi Jordan. Not shown are U.P. conductor R. V. Gustus and fireman Bob Krueger (of Union Pacific's steam crew). Photo by Ken Ziegenbein.*

It was still raining as we pulled out at 8:00 a.m. The steam was blocking any view from the side, it being so damp. I was standing, holding on to the oil tender, as there are only four seats in the *Challenger* cab - one for the engineer, fireman, conductor and pilot.

Arkansas Railroader

I got to ride (and video) all the way to Russellville, where we arrived two hours early. (Apparently, the dispatcher gave us the right of way all the way to North Little Rock, one reason being to get us out of the rain as soon as possible). The ride was an experience, as can be seen by the shaking on the video. I couldn't see anything looking out the side - the engine is so long. It's like having two diesel-electric engines in front of you. I had faith that tracks were there.

I got off at Russellville and joined the others to chase to North Little Rock. We really had a time staying ahead of the train. Arrival in North Little Rock was about 2:30 p.m., again two hours early (it was supposed to go through Conway at 3:30 p.m., instead getting there at 1:30 p.m., leaving an estimated 200 people waiting to see it in downtown Conway at 3:30 p.m.). We understand that there were many who waited for this train along the line between North Little Rock and Missouri, not having gotten the word that the train had been rerouted.



*KATV's "Daybreak" show was doing live segments from the display site, beginning at 6:00 a.m. June 5. L-R: John Hodkin, Mark Davis and Dwain Graham of Channel 7.*

Monday, June 5, the train and engine were on display in North Little Rock on the business tracks behind the old dispatcher's office. John and I got to the display site at 5:00 a.m. to set up signs and get ready for the Channel 7 (KATV) "Daybreak" show, which did live feeds from the engine between 6 and 7 a.m. U.P. Public Relation's Mark Davis handled the U.P.

end of the interviews and John did our club's portion. People started pouring in, starting at 7 a.m. after hearing the interviews. We sold tickets there all day, aboard the car "Sherman Hill," a former Railway Postoffice car.

That evening at 6 p.m., car hosts met on the train to be given a safety lecture by Steve Lee. This meeting was mandatory. Unfortunately, the food for the next day's trip arrived right in the middle of the safety talk, and John had to leave to help unload the food. This caused a little confusion about car assignments for the car hosts, and some left not knowing what car they would be assigned to the next day. However, all worked out O.K.

The next morning, June 6, all car hosts gathered at the river, † the wonderful, †† wonderful † river - †† we all gathered at † the river † † and... (sorry, wrong story). We met at the parking lot in North Little Rock at Broadway and Willow about 6 a.m., parking cars and



handing out U.P. release forms. All 412 paying passengers were bussed to Union Station in Little Rock at 6:30 a.m. (Arrow Coach Lines).

The train arrived at Union Station (Amtrak Station) at 7:30 a.m. It was quite a site coming round the bend after crossing the Baring Cross bridge over the Arkansas River. We were loaded and ready to go at 8:00 a.m. We left about 8:10 a.m., letting several freights run ahead. The adventure was on!

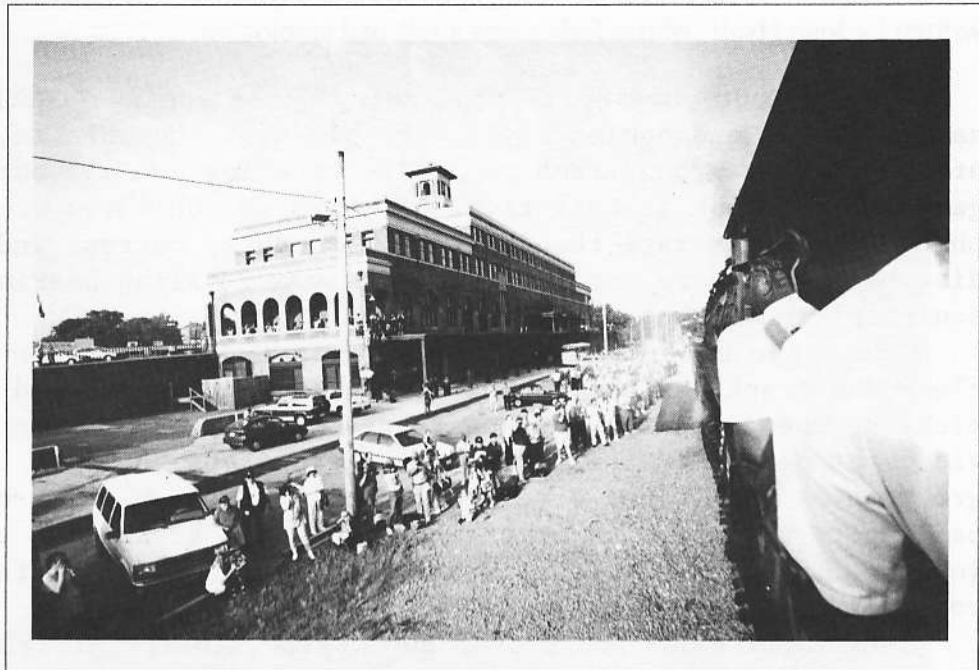
A coal train was ahead of us, so that slowed us up a little. Because of the coal train,

we stopped and had a photo runby somewhere between Wrightsville and Redfield. This was chigger/tick heaven - you could just imagine those creatures licking their teeny lips, anticipating a sumptuous feast of human blood. They weren't disappointed. Neither was the runby, as Steve Lee really knows how to put on a good show. (Perhaps a few of those juicy ticks got smushed on the rails!)

Off and running again toward Pine Bluff we went, passing Peter and Sylvia Smykla's Alcos with Sylvia sounding a loud horn on the Alco and Peter waving as he took pictures. Good show.

We eased through Pine Bluff about 10 a.m. Apparently, we had scheduled a 10-minute stop at the downtown depot, but didn't stop until we reached the U.P. yard. There, the winner of a cab ride got on the engine for a ride to McGehee (U.P. sold chances for a cab ride to the public over the entire trip for \$5 each or 6 for \$25 - they drew a winner each time and there were many buyers). The person winning this particular segment was a retired Missouri Pacific engineer who used to run MoP steam engines).

I noticed there were very few people watching the train go through Pine Bluff, even though it was advertised in the paper there the week before. Apparently, all those Cotton Belt 819 trips in the past have taken some of the excitement out of seeing steam engines there, or maybe they just like to see the 819 (although when the 819 was returning from Tyler a few years ago, there weren't many waiting to see its return either). How soon things become routine! It's too bad that the Cotton Belt Rail Historical Society chose not to help sponsor this trip - they could have sold lots of tickets to McGehee or from Little Rock to Pine Bluff.



*View from the Challenger as it approached the crowd at Union Station in Little Rock, 7:30 a.m. June 6. It had just made a 90-degree right turn off the Baring Cross bridge. Photo by John C. Jones*

Arrival at McGehee was at 11:45 a.m. This is where we served lunch (catered by RSVP Catering). This was a 30-minute servicing stop and the townspeople were there in droves. Here's a quote from the local McGehee newspaper on June 7 (the *McGehee-Dermott Times-News*, written by Joan Hyatt, whose father was a railroad employee):

"The shout goes up, 'It's coming! It's coming!' Necks crane, cameras roll, and babies cry at the blast of the whistle, the hiss of steam, and the ground rumbles at its' passing. We all surge forward to get a closer look at this titan of the past. Children are posed for photos to commemorate the event. Railroaders, current and retired, discuss and compare memories. Workers swarm oiling bearings and checking equipment in the hot noon sun.

Soon the bell begins to ring, the whistle blows and bystanders clear the track, as the engine groans and lumbers toward Monroe. It picks up speed and the passenger cars slip by. People on the ground take videos of people on the train taking videos of them. On the ground the group waves as if they were seeing someone off on a journey and the passengers wave back as if they are the ones brought to begin that journey. In that short span of time and train, a fleet feeling of community surfaces again.

As black smoke pours from the engine, in it I imagine the faces of the departed railroad men, some long dead, scanning the crowd. As was usual in the old days, the 'call boy,' Snowball, calls to them using their last names as they often did.

'Arduengo, isn't that your boy over there? Came all the way from Hot Springs to see this. I hear he is making a scale model of the depot.'

'Hey, Binns and you Avery guys, W.R. and James, there are your sons and brother, a daughter and sister and great grandchildren to boot.'

'Wyeth, there's your boy and girl standing down the track.'

'Red Rose, that your boy over there? Looks like he's a chip off the old block, a railroad man like you.'

'Look back there, Bayne, there's your daughter who lives here and your sons from Houston.'

'Duren, I believe that's your daughter over behind that video camera with your 11-year old great grandson. Hasn't been a steam engine through here since he was a baby. I remember it was on its' was to the World's Fair in New Orleans.'

'Sorry, you other guys, we're fading away with the smoke. Maybe next time.'

The steam engine of the past pulling passenger cars of today has come this way once again. As it fades from our view, let us resolve to reach back and reclaim the best of our heritage of those 'good ole days,' instill that spirit of community in the present and make the future of McGehee an even brighter one than its' past."



Leaving McGehee at 12:30 p.m., we had a hi-rail ahead of us looking for possible sun kinks in the rails. Limited in speed to 45 mph, the hi-rail slowed us up, and since we were followed by several freights, we couldn't stop either. So...no more runbys.

Arrival in Monroe (at 3:30 p.m.) was messed up by some last minute changes of the stopping point. We were not supposed to stop on 12th Street where we did, instead of at the yard office on Mississippi Street. Nobody knew why these changes were made locally at Monroe without anyone's approval. I heard the local police were threatening to give a ticket to the conductor for blocking that crossing, too. However, everyone that got off probably didn't know anything was messed up, and all got on their buses back to Little Rock.

Club member Don Smith from Monroe gave Barton Jennings a ride to his hotel and John Jones, who had been photographing the train, gave some



**TOP** - Former head of Norfolk Southern's steam program, Carl Jensen, rode the entire trip from Little Rock to Houston. Here he's seen in the concession car "Sherman Hill" during the trip. **BOTTOM** - "Rare-mileage" railfans, left to right: Phillip B. Bush II, Carl Jensen and Mia Mather.

of us rides to our hotel from the unloading site (we were loaded on the back of a pickup through some undesirable neighborhoods in Monroe).

From this point on, five of us rode the rest of the journey to Houston; myself, John, Tammy, Bart and Ben Lienau of the St. Louis Chapter, who lives in Illinois. We collected money for the Monroe-Shreveport and Palestine-Houston segments for Union Pacific and were car hosts on these two legs. All told, we sold 85 tickets from Monroe to Shreveport and 31 from Palestine-Houston (most of the latter were rare-mileage railfans).

On Wednesday, June 7, we left Monroe at 8:00 a.m. The train went down toward Alexandria then north to Shreveport. A party of U.P. employees boarded near Alexandria and the mayor of Natchitoches, Louisiana boarded there with a party (the mayor's group immediately went to the nearest dome, the Columbine, and wanted to go up - however, I stood on the dome steps and told them those seats had been sold at Monroe. They still wanted to go up, but finally were told by U.P. personnel that they had to go to the next car. Paying passengers have preference. Oh, well, just a little misunderstanding.

Arrival at Shreveport was around 3:30 p.m. (actually arrival was at Reisor, way out of town). We all got taxis to our hotel, the downtown Holiday Inn in Shreveport, next to several busy rail lines. It was sunny and hot - generally a miserable day for standing around waiting for a taxi.

The train the next morning, June 8, was supposed to leave downtown Shreveport from the riverfront at 8:00 a.m., but didn't get there until 9 or so (diesels brought the cars to the site and took us back to Reisor to hook onto the *Challenger*.) I imagine the Shreveport group sponsoring this trip - the Red River Valley Railroad Historical Society - was quite upset about the lateness - they gave everybody free soft drinks after they boarded.

We had a nice runby somewhere in northeast Texas - the train was going uphill all the way. Arrival in Palestine, Texas was about 2:30 p.m. - it was hot again. No shade was close to the unloading site, either. We found out, to our dismay, that Palestine doesn't have taxis! Some local people finally picked us up and took us to our hotels.

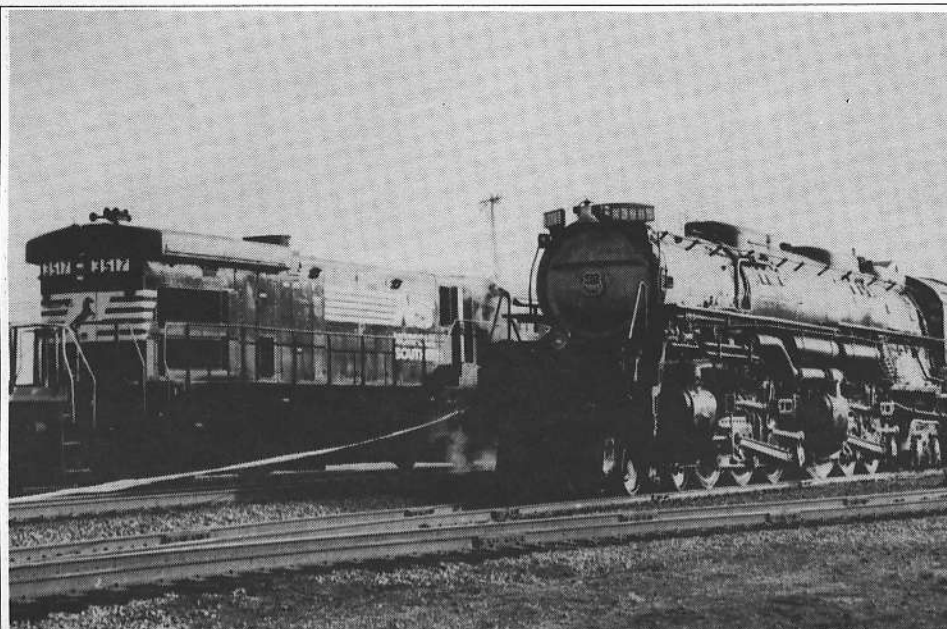
The next morning, June 9, a Friday, the final leg of our trip began, I was taken to the boarding site by the U.P. crew because there was supposed to be some people there wanting tickets. A group of U.P. employees and family did board, an extremely friendly bunch of people, I might add, and rode to Conroe. Plus we had our regular paying through-riders plus Dimmitt William and his mother.

Except for putting the train in emergency in Conroe because a car had got caught between the lowered crossing gates at a crossing, the Palestine-Houston trip (route of the old MoP Texas Eagle) was uneventful. Arrival at the Burlington Northern Hub Center in east Houston was about 2:30 p.m.

From here John, Tammy and myself took a taxi to Intercontinental Airport and flew back to Little Rock, arriving at 10:50 p.m. (our luggage had arrived on an earlier flight, causing some confusion in Little Rock). This was also Tammy Hodkin's first airplane flight.

It was a great week, which seems to get more significant with time. Sometimes during the trip, we could not really enjoy ourselves because of carhost duties, but I wouldn't trade this trip for anything.

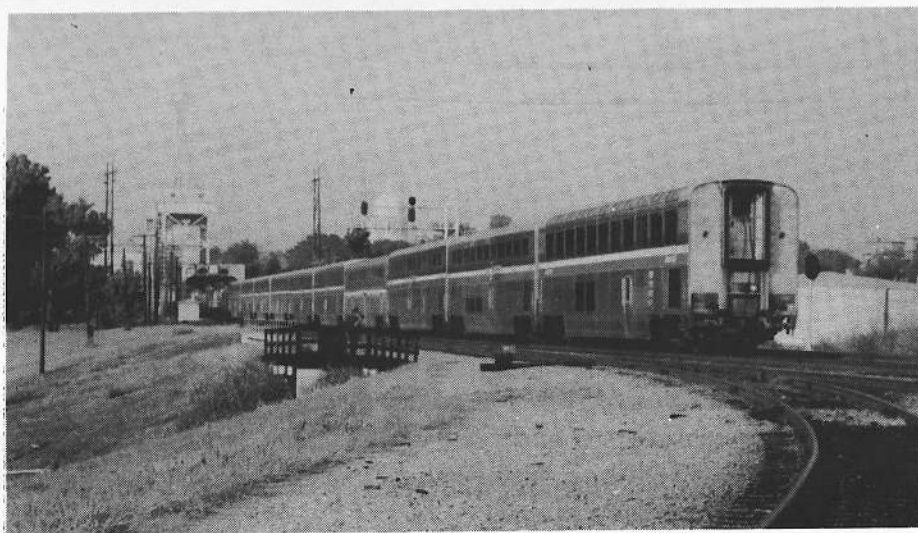




**LEFT** - Norfolk Southern #3517 helps pull a Union Pacific freight past the steam engine early in the morning of June 5. As you know, NS got out of the steam excursion business last December and I thought this photo quite fitting.



**LEFT** - Amtrak's "Texas Eagle" slowly moves southbound past the displayed Challenger at 7:35 a.m. June 5.

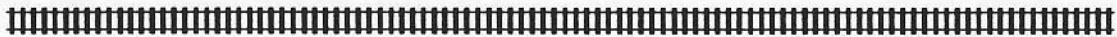


**LEFT** - The 10-car "Texas Eagle" ready to cross the Arkansas River over the Baring Cross bridge on June 5. (All photos by Ken Ziegenbein)





*The Challenger heads east along the Arkansas River as it passes through Ozark, Arkansas on June 4, 1995. Yours truly, Ken Ziegenbein, was a guest in the cab at this time. (Photo © David Hoge and Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. It may NOT be published elsewhere except by written permission of photographer David Hoge and the Democrat-Gazette)*



ARKANSAS RAILROADER

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## NEXT MEETING/PROGRAM

The next meeting of the Arkansas Railroad Club will be held on SUNDAY, AUGUST 13 at 2 p.m. at Twin City Bank in North Little Rock. Refreshments will be served. The program will be given by **BILL BAILEY**. He will show slides of various railroad subjects, including some rare photos of the Rock Island's Biddle shops.

**CHRISTMAS PARTY** - Yep, its already time to think about our annual Christmas party. We have reserved a railcar at the Spaghetti Warehouse (located in the old Choctaw Rock Island depot off 2nd Street in Little Rock) for Saturday, December 9. Seating begins at 7:00 p.m. and everyone will order off the menu. **THERE ARE ONLY 40 SEATS AVAILABLE ON THIS CAR** and 25 signed up already at the July 9 meeting. If you'd like to come, call our V.P. John Jones at 501-835-3729 SOON. Union Pacific Superintendent Jeff Raffety of North Little Rock will be our speaker.

**RAILFAN BY ACCIDENT?** - In the June 8 edition of the *North Little Rock Times*, a reporter asked **BARTON JENNINGS** why he liked trains so much. That was a mistake. The joke in his family is that his great love for the big engines was caused by brain damage. "I was three years old and riding with my grandmother," he said. "We came to a track and I said 'choo choo' She threw on the brakes and I went through the windshield." With no other explanation for his passion, his family has surmised that it must have been the concussion. (*North Little Rock Times, June 8 by Joan McCoy*)

**"ILL" RAILFAN?** - **JONATHAN ROYCE** never worked for a railroad, but he has a love of trains that his wife Faye Jean Royce compares to an illness, one that she has contracted as well. "The first time he asked me out, he asked me if I'd like to go rail fanning," she said. She'd never heard of the practice, so she told him they probably should get married first. But rail fanning is common among train buffs, he said, and it has nothing to do with any sort of amorous behavior. "It's a disease," she said. (*Joan McCoy of the North Little Rock Times after an interview*)

**ROCK ISLAND GROUP TO MEET** on July 29, Saturday, at 1:00 pm at the North Little Rock Community Center off Pershing Avenue in North Little Rock. John Martin will give a program. This meeting will also organize the group officially with election of officers. Contact David Crotts, 8828 Graphic Dr, Alma AR 72921, 501-997-8964.

**T.W.M. LONG**

Born October 2, 1918

Died March 7, 1995

**OBIT - T.W.M. LONG**

written by Gene Hull

A well-known and well-liked member of the Arkansas Railroad Club passed away 7 March, 1995 at Shreveport, Louisiana of lung cancer.

Tom was President and General Manager of the Reader Railroad at one time. He was a gentleman



in the true Southern tradition. His flat-crown straw hat and deep drawling voice will be greatly missed. Tom Long and the Reader Railroad were synonymous.

The Reader was created because of the growing number of oil wells in southwest Arkansas. The Mansfield Lumber Company acquired a small struggling lumber mill in 1924, based at the little town of Reader, in Ouachita County about 20 miles northwest of Camden.

Several oil wells were drilled in the vicinity of Waterloo, Nevada County, about 25 miles southwest of Reader. Much of the crude oil was too thick to pump through a pipeline. The primitive roads were inadequate for trucks. To meet an obvious need, the Mansfield Lumber Company diversified - the Reader Railroad was formed 10 August 1925 to transport the oil to Reader station on the Missouri Pacific.

The little railroad began struggling financially during the Great Depression. In 1936 a receiver was appointed, and in the early 1940s dividends began to appear.

By 1956, the Mansfield Lumber Company lost interest in railroading. The Reader was headed for obsolescence. A building-materials merchant at Shreveport, Louisiana became concerned. His wife's grandfather was involved in the construction of the railroad. The fellow had a sentimental attachment for the railroad and its three decrepit steam locomotives, two of which were inoperative and the third was in poor condition.

Tom Long purchased the Reader Railroad .

One of the old locomotives was rebuilt and another steam engine was purchased from a road in Texas.

Many railroads in America were disposing of steam engines in favor of diesel power. The old steam engines on the Reader soon began to attract attention of a sentimental segment of society. Visitors soon began to make their way through the dense pine forest to be thrilled by the sight, sound and smell of the locomotives.

Visiting rail fans soon persuaded Tom Long to acquire a couple of passenger cars. If he would offer a comfortable ride, the people would come.

They did.

A representative of the Arkansas Publicity and Parks Commission, as well as the governor also came. Travel brochures soon were advertising the "Possum Trot Line." A larger steam locomotive was purchased from the Warren & Saline River Railroad at Warren, Arkansas - an ex-Army engine No. 1702.

This engine required a great deal of work. Mr. David P. Morgan, editor of TRAINS Magazine, told Tom if the 1702 were rebuilt, he would come to Reader and christen her. This event came on 4 April 1966, when David's wife, Margaret, splashed a pint and 10 ounces of French champagne on the engine's pilot. The Arkansas Railroad Club chartered the train several times to enjoy a day on the POSSUM TROT Line.

In the early 1970s, the Berry Asphalt Company ceased operation at Waterloo. During 1971, it cost the Reader Railroad 1.53 times as much as the revenues to keep train running. Tom Long said, "enough is enough."

Early in 1973, bills were passed by the Arkansas Legislature to allow the Arkansas Parks Department to purchase the railroad. Nothing was done.

In 1975, the Reader Railroad was sold to the Little Missouri Corporation for a tourist operation. Tom Long and the Possum Trot Line had parted. Tom now has departed and surely will be missed. **R.I.P.**

**BRIEF HISTORY OF BILL CHURCH'S MILITARY SERVICE** - POLLY CHURCH gave the following story about Bill Church to Naomi Hull to pass along to our members. As you know, Bill suffered a stroke in 1992 and has been in the VA Medical Center, Fort Roots, North Little Rock generally ever since. Here's his military service history:

William Church enlisted in the Army on November 10, 1941, at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. He was sent to Fort Leonard Wood to begin basic training with the 27th Engineers and later was transferred to the 37th Engineers at Camp Bowie, Texas. After our country became involved in war December 7,

1941, he was sent to Camp Bowie, Texas, thence to Fort Devons, Mass. for deployment to North Africa to join Patton's army there. A last minute transfer came which took him instead to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, and into a group of railroad men.

The commanding officer, Major Henry Isrel, was in the process of assembling soldiers, who were formerly railroad men from various railroads all over the country, for a new venture in railroading in the Persian Gulf.

Major Isrel, of the 12th Engineers and himself a former railroader, walked from Camp Claiborne to Camp Polk, Louisiana, and mentally laid out a railroad right-of-way without benefit of any kind of surveyor's instrument and no pad and pencil to make notes. He then sat down and drew blueprints with instructions on proper grading, curves, etc.

As part of their training, the men at the two Camps began building a railroad from each camp with a meeting point in the middle. That meeting point was reached on July 11, 1942, hence the title of their new outfit, the 711 Railway Engineers. The railroad was named the Claiborne and Polk Military Railroad. By this time William had attained the rating of Sergeant and considered himself a seasoned soldier.

On November 1, 1942, the new company of 711 Railway Engineers sailed for Khorramshahr, Persia (now Iran) on the U.S.S. West Point, which had been converted to military use. Their ports-of-call were Rio-de-Janeiro, Brazil, and Bombay, India. Our lend-lease program with Russia and our other allies was about to be set in motion.

The 711 was the first company to reach Persia and as they looked about at all of the desert sand they were asking "where in our camp"? The answer was about a mile that-a-way, but the truth was there was no camp yet. The men slept on the ground and the sand turned to mud when it rained. Still they went about their duties in getting ready to move trains from the Persian Gulf to the Russian border hauling war materials and supplies to Russia, our new ally against Nazi Germany.

Eventually they got tents with cots, but they still had problems like flies, mosquitos, scorpions, snakes, and the unbearable everlasting heat. The temperature was an average 150 degrees with no shade tree in sight and no mercy from the blasting sun and burning sand. One young soldier, name unknown, who was poetically inclined, wrote:

*Somewhere in Iran, where the sun is like a curse  
and every day is followed by another slightly worse  
There the brick red dust is blowing thicker than the shifting desert sand  
while a G.I. dreams and wishes for a greener fairer land.  
Somewhere in Iran where all the women are unseen  
where the sky is never cloudy and the grass is never green  
There the jackals howl at night, robbing men of blessed sleep  
and there isn't any whiskey, and beer is never cheap.  
Somewhere in Iran where the nights are made for love  
and the yellow moon's a spotlight with the silver stars above  
sparkling like a diamond necklace in the vast tropic night  
there is a shameful waste of beauty, for there ain't a girl in sight.  
Somewhere in Iran where the snakes and lizards play  
where a hundred thousand sand flies replace the one you slay,  
Oh, take me back to the U.S.A., let me hear the factory bell  
for this God forsaken country is just a substitute for Hell.*

Other units were coming in and the Shatt El Arab River was dredged to create a ship's channel. Jetties and piers were built for unloading the ship's cargo of war material and loading them onto the trains. The docks and the railroad yards were incorporated into one unit. They used the existing railroad and built other lines to accommodate other ports in the Persian Gulf. (Now they knew why

they had built a railroad back in Louisiana).

The whole operation had come together and the Allied ships came into port, unloaded their cargo which was loaded onto trains and hauled to the Russian border where a Russian train crew met them and took the train on in. William Church was a yardmaster/chief yard clerk in the railroad yards in Khorramshahr - one link in this large undertaking - where he remained until the end of the war in 1945. He was discharged at Fort Benning, Georgia, October 12, 1945.

After returning to Missouri, he went into the Army Reserves with the 730th Railway Operating Bn. and went to Fort Eustes, Virginia, with that unit. He was enrolled in the Company Officers Course from which he graduated. He had the honor and pleasure of having his old Commanding Officer, Major Henry Isrel, rip off the chevrons from his blouse and present him with two gold bars and a commission of 2nd Lieutenant. Major Isrel, with a wink, and a twinkle in his eye said, "Bill, if I ever catch you not wearing these, I will have you court-martialed." His military career ended in 1950 when his Reserve Unit was discontinued and disbanded.

### WANTED/FOR SALE-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. Only personal inquiries, NO COMMERCIAL BUSINESS, please. We reserve the right to refuse listings if deemed inappropriate. The Arkansas Railroad Club is not responsible for misleading ads.

**WANTED** - Information on the closing of the East Little Rock tower, located at the end of RI's Arkansas River bridge. The tower was automated in late 1962-early 1963, but a more exact closing/dismantling date is needed. Also needed are RI time books (engineer or conductor) for pre-1963 passenger service, to provide data on locomotive assignments and consists. Time books will be photocopied and original returned to owner. - BILL POLLARD, 3005 Baxter, Conway AR 72032.

**WANTED** - Nathan five chime-type diesel air horn or an air horn with 3 or 5 chimes. RONALD CHAMBERLAIN, 2533 S Kansas St, Wichita KS 67216-2157.

**WANTED** - Information on Gurdon, Arkansas railroading: 1) When was the Union Pacific mainline from Little Rock to Texarkana built? I need a general history of the line; 2) History of the Norman Branch. When did it cease running to Norman?; 3) History of the Gurdon-El Dorado sub; 4) When did Arkansas Midland begin operations at Gurdon, and what is the extent of their operation? PETER EHRLICH, 473 Edinburgh Street, San Francisco CA 94112-2819.

**FOR SALE** - GENE SEMON, 2718 Hwy 38, Cabot AR 72023, 501-945-8599 has some copies of Eudaly's "Missouri Pacific Diesel Power" for sale to club members for \$50, postage and tax paid. He'll also have a few of the new books "Route of the Eagles" for \$40, shipping paid.

### ARKANSAS RAIL NEWS

**ROCK ISLAND BRIDGE GONE?** - (Little Rock) - Union Pacific has applied for permission from the Army Corps of Engineers to demolish the old 1899 Rock Island span across the Arkansas River, once used by the Rock's "Sunbelt" line between New Mexico and Memphis. U.P. plans to use the lift span in the center of the bridge in another part of the railroad's system and will demolish the rest of the bridge. They hope to get started on this demolition by the end of 1995. This Rock Island bridge is the oldest span over the Arkansas River in Little Rock. However, several city officials and planners don't want the bridge taken down. Instead, they want to use it as a pedestrian causeway linking both shores of a redeveloped riverfront. Other plans see the bridge as a light rail connection. (*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, June 9, 1995 by Jim Brooks via Jonathan Royce*)



**HAZEN DEPOT GRANT** - (Hazen) - The Rock Island depot at Hazen was among the projects across the state receiving grant money the week of June 8. The city of Hazen raised half the amount first, exact amount not revealed. The money will be used to air condition the building and build handicapped entrances. It is currently being used as a community building, with some of the original Rock Island tracks still in place in front. (*White River Journal, Des Arc, June 8, 1995*)

**UP JOBS TO NLR** - (North Little Rock) - Union Pacific expects to move 70 jobs to its North Little Rock locomotive repair shop after closing four former Chicago & Northwestern Railway shops in the Midwest this fall. U.P. acquired the C&NW March 10. U.P. has 2,611 employees in Arkansas, spokesman John Bromley said. (*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette by Randy Tardy*)

**WALNUT RIDGE DEPOT REMODELING** - (Walnut Ridge) - After years of planning and fundraising, renovation work finally began on the old Missouri Pacific depot at Walnut Ridge the last week of May. In 1993, the project got \$266,328 matching funds from the ISTEAF funds of the Arkansas Transportation Department, after raising \$120,000 locally (they only needed to raise \$68,000). The depot was built in 1910. Plans are to open an Amtrak waiting room (the *Texas Eagle* stops there in the wee hours three times a week) 24-hours a day and make the building a Chamber office. Work should be finished by the end of October (wonder if Amtrak will still be around?) (*Jonesboro Sun, May 25*)

**HOPE DEPOT CLOCK** - (Hope) - Renovation of the Missouri Pacific depot in Hope, the birthplace of President Clinton, is moving right along. The original Seth Thomas pendulum clock with a rich oak case was recently donated to the depot by the Clark family of Spring Hill, in memory of their parents, who got the clock in the early 1960s. The depot was built in 1911 for \$29,000. (*Hope Star, June 9 by Judy Crow*)

**INTERMODAL FACILITY OPEN** - (Marion) - The Santa Fe Railway intermodal facility of Marion was expected to be open in early June. The 26 acres is owned by Burlington Northern but leased to the Santa Fe. (*Evening Times, West Memphis, May 25*)

**NEW RAIL-RELATED JOBS** - (Hot Springs) - Arkansas Shortline Railroads, Inc has relocated to Hot Springs. The company employs 105 people. It is the parent corporation of six individual companies, including Railcar Repair of the South, Arkansas Railroad Contractors, Inc. and Arkansas Motive Power Services, Inc. (*The Sentinel-Record, Hot Springs, June 7*)

**TOOLCAR DESTROYED** - (Black Rock) - Two youths have confessed to an expensive fire that destroyed a Burlington Northern tool car May 28 in Black Rock. The youths are 12 and 15 years old. Damage was estimated at \$750,000. (*The Times Dispatch, Walnut Ridge, June 7*)

**BIZARRE DEATH** - (Hardy) - A 4-year old girl was killed at 10:31 p.m. June 3 when she was thrown from a car driven by her mother and landed on Burlington Northern tracks near Hardy. Misty Bishop's mother said that she had tried to avoid hitting an animal and lost control of her car. It hit a guard rail and rolled down the embankment onto the BN tracks 2 miles east of Hardy on U.S. Highway 63. What was really bizarre was that the dead girl and the car were both on the tracks and a BN freight was only 2 minutes away. The mother was standing there screaming for someone to do CPR on the girl. County deputy Ted Tipton was kneeling down over the girl when someone yelled "a train is coming." Hardy police chief Ernie Rose was also there. He immediately radioed for all trains to stop, but it was too late.

Deputy Tipton said the child's mother was struggling with him when he tried to pick up the girl and get all of them off the tracks (the mother was holding her 2-year old son, who was also injured in the wreck). Tipton fell on his knees trying to take the mother and the other two off the tracks. He finally lifted the boy by his belt and pushed her off the tracks. They then moved up the track away from the impact sure to come (remember, the car was also on the tracks). Tipton said he ran to the embankment with the girl and covered her with his body, and at 10:33 p.m. the BN train hit the 1986

LeBaron, with debris going everywhere. This was a close call for everyone involved. (*The News, Salem, June 8 by Angelia Roberts*)

**MAJOR DERAILMENT** - (Corning) - On Saturday, June 17 at 5:40 p.m., 21 cars of a Union Pacific freight derailed in Corning, prompting the evacuation of about 1400 people. One of the tank cars burned for about a day and a half. However, it was carrying a non-toxic chemical used in making plastics. The line was reopened early Monday morning, June 19. Cause of the wreck was a possible warped rail. Two train had reported a rough ride over this section of track earlier in the day. Routine track work at crossings in the city were scheduled to begin the next Sunday morning. (*Clay County Courier, Corning, June 22*)

**ASHLEY, DREW & NORTHERN MAY ABANDON ROUTE** - (Crossett) - The 85-year-old short-line railroad owned by Georgia-Pacific, the AD&N, is filing for approval to abandon its 41-mile route between Crossett and Monticello. The shutdown will cause the loss of 40 jobs. The AD&N hauls mostly plywood and interchanges with the Union Pacific at Monticello. AD&N personnel are all unionized by the large railroad unions. Because of the abandonment, Russell Tedder, AD&N President and Arkansas Railroad Club member, said the AD&N plans to sell part of its track into Crossett to the Fordyce & Princeton RR, which now leases some of the track. Also, the AD&N recently purchased the Arkansas and Louisiana-Missouri down to Monroe, which has a better link with Union Pacific. (*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, June 17 by Randy Tardy*)

#### GENERAL RAIL NEWS

**BURIED STEAM LOCOMOTIVE** - (Garysburg, North Carolina) - State archaeologists have confirmed that a steam engine, possibly dating back to the 1870s, lies a few feet beneath the intersection of US 301 and North Carolina 186. The story goes back to 1933. Road crews were widening Highway 301 starting at the Virginia border and when they reached Garysburg, they found the locomotive in the right-of-way. Apparently used on one of the state's first railroads, it was later used to haul logs. When the logging company went out of business, the locomotive was left to rust. The state couldn't get the last owners to move the engine but they secured a court order giving them permission to dispose of it. A former worker in the North Carolina Highway Department said they couldn't move it - so they dug a pit and buried it! (*NRHS News, June 1995*)

**SUBWAY STARTED FINALLY** - (Warsaw, Poland) - After 70 years of planning and delays by WWII and Soviet Communism, Warsaw, Poland finally got part of its subway built early this year. Of course, the 7-mile system that opened runs from nowhere to nowhere (kind of like the old M&NA did in Arkansas?)

*Railroads are neither playgrounds nor pathways, sporting sites nor fitness centers - and the only shortcut they can be for the trespasser is a shortcut to disaster!*

- Jim Bearden, Director of Safety, Southern Pacific

**TOURIST LINE ACCIDENTS** - (Gardners Station, Pennsylvania) - About 7:15 p.m. June 16, the firebox blew up on Gettysburg Steam Railroad's locomotive #1278, a light Pacific, as it pulled into Gardners Station, Pennsylvania. The explosion sent superheated steam, ash, embers and smoke into the cab. The train and cars were quickly shrouded in black smoke. Apparently, the crown sheet ruptured, caused by a low water level. Five people were injured, including the Superintendent of the railroad, Jim Cornell, who had burns over 60% of his body. This was a dinner train loaded with 150 passengers in five cars, but apparently only the engine crew were injured.

Another tourist line accident occurred on June 17 on the Nevada Northern near Ely, Nevada. A car

loaded with ties got loose from a siding and rolled at speeds up to 60 mph down the main line, entering a tunnel, which slowed it to 30 mph, then hit the tourist train just outside the tunnel. Fifty-six passengers were sent to the hospital, 3 seriously injured. The engine (#93, built in 1909 by American Locomotive Works) was pulling two coaches holding about 100 passengers. The engine was badly damaged, sustaining about \$200,000 worth of damage. Coach A2 had \$100,000 damage and will probably be scrapped. Coach A3 had \$20,000 damage. Glass and chandeliers in the cars were all shattered. (*Various Internet sources*)

**LINE COULD REOPEN** - (San Diego, California) - The 76-year old San Diego & Arizona Eastern Railroad could be reopened if they can get \$18.8 million to restore the 114-mile line. A new feasibility study says the reopened line could make \$21.4 million profit in 15 years. (*San Diego Union Tribune, June 24, 1995 via Donald Smith*)

### AMTRAK NEWS

**BUDGETS, ETC** - Although the U.S. House and Senate will continue to fund Amtrak until the subsidies are phased out by 2002, a member (Susan V. Molinari, R-N.Y.) of the House Committee in charge of getting the actual bill to the floor to vote on is refusing to "mark it up" because other members of the committee refused to go along with her demand to change the already negotiated labor contracts with unions and Amtrak. Stay tuned.

If it get to a vote, Amtrak would become private by 2002 and could sell stock. Amtrak could also contract out services, not have to have a minimum route system anymore, do away with the 6-year severance pay negotiated with unions in the 1970s, and limit Amtrak's liability of damages to \$250,000. (*The Dispatcher, July 1995*)

**TICKET SALES** - In fiscal 1994, travel agents produced 40% of Amtrak's passenger revenues. (*NARP News, June 1995*)

**TRAIN RIDING FACTS** - In Amtrak's 1994 Annual Report, it was stated that long distance travel by train accounts for less than one percent of all long distance travel. Each year, Americans travel 228 miles by road for each mile traveled by rail. In Canada, this ratio is 76 to 1; England 14 to 1; France 8 to 1; Japan 2 to 1. (*Trainline, Tourist Railway Association, June 1995 via Jim Johnson*)

### EXCURSIONS/SHOWS/EVENTS OF OTHER CLUBS

☛ ...note...these are listed sequentially by dates, earliest dates being first...

**SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS-BRANSON, MISSOURI** - Stopped running routinely - it's last trip was June 26, but may run another trip in October. The train will be attached to Amtrak's *Texas Eagle* in both directions from Texas, then go on its own from Little Rock to Branson (according to John C. Jones). Five-day packages, including shows at Branson and hotels, start at \$1,225 per person. Call 1-800-AOE-0389 or write American Orient Express, PO Box 460707, San Antonio TX 78246-0707 for more information.

**BRANSON, MISSOURI** - The Branson Scenic Railway runs several round trips a day from Branson into Arkansas over the White River Line. Cost is \$18.50 adults. They continue to sell out and reservations are recommended. As of mid July, they ran at 8:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. Contact them at 206 East Main, Branson MO 65616 or call 1-800-2-TRAIN-2 or 417-334-6110.

**ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI** - August 5, 1995 - *The Egyptian Special* public excursions using Union Pacific's E units and streamlined cars - runs through Southern Illinois through what is known as Egypt - trips leave St. Louis 8:00 a.m. going through Chester, Illinois, Mt. Vernon, Benton and Gortham -



prices start at \$65 coach up to \$130 coach for whole trip - Contact St. Louis Chapter NRHS, 11221 Manchester Rd, Suite 321, St. Louis MO 63122.

**SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS** - August 5, 1995 - 16th Annual Meeting and Railroadiana Show of the Illinois Central Railroad Historical Society, Holiday Inn East, Springfield IL, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Admission is \$1.00/person or \$2.00/family. Dealer tables are \$20. - Contact Mark L. Miller, 1204A West Central, Marion IL 62959-1022 or call 618-997-5788 evenings.

**DURANGO, COLORADO** - September 16, 1995 - The annual Ed Gerlits fall foliage run on the Durango & Silverton. Round trip fare is \$70 per person. Send check to Ed Gerlits, 1540 Routt St, Lakewood CO 80215 or call 303-232-9262.

**LEE'S SUMMIT, MISSOURI** - September 23, 1995 - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. - Fifth annual Heart of America Kansas City Railroadiana Show at John Knox Pavilion, 520 Murray Rd - tables are \$22 until September 12, admission is \$2.00 - 175 dealer tables expected - call 816-373-9364 for information.

**ROCK ISLAND GROUP** meets about twice a year. They will meet July 29 at the North Little Rock Community Center at 1:00 p.m. Contact David Crotts, 8828 S Graphic Dr, Alma AR 72921 or call 501-997-8964. Another group, the Rock Island retired group also meets, about once monthly, at various locations. Contact L. T. Walker, 3520 Lakeview Rd, North Little Rock AR 72116 for information on this organization.

**SPRINGDALE, VAN BUREN, ARKANSAS** - Ozark train rides - Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays - The Arkansas & Missouri Railroad specials leave Springdale, Arkansas 7:45 a.m., leaves Van Buren 11:00 a.m. Call 501-751-8600 or 800-687-8600 for information.

**CALICO ROCK, ARKANSAS** - 90-mile round trips between Flippin and Calico Rock, Arkansas along the former Missouri Pacific (now Missouri & Northern Arkansas) Railroad's White River line. Uses former MoP coaches. Trains leave Flippin at 8:45 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. and runs Thursday-Monday through August and will run on a different schedule in September-December. Fares are \$22.00 adults, \$14.00 children. Call 800-305-6527 for reservations. You can write to the ticket office, 10 North Main Place, PO Box 1093, Flippin AR 72634. Tickets may also be bought on board. ~~ARK~~

## RAILROAD WHEEL WEAR

by: Gene Hull

For many years railroad mechanical engineers were puzzled by the fact that wheel flange wear was greater on one side of equipment on railroads which lay in a general north-south direction. On roads running generally east-west, the wear was practically the same on both sides.

After long years of speculation and theory, it was determined the uneven wear was due to constant pressure upon the western side of the equipment on the north-south roads because of the west-to-east rotation of the earth.

This was noted on page 48 of RAILROAD Magazine for May 1974.

Is this uneven wear actual fact or legend?

(In one of my physics classes in college in the late 1960s, a professor also stated this "centrifugal" force had actually caused uneven wear on some railroads over the long term, mainly on the western-most track, not just the wheel flanges. However, he said since not all rail cars run the same direction all the time - they're turned around in many cases - the same car's west-facing wheels could be facing east on its next trip. But, the wear DID show up on directly north-south rails of heavily used railroads. - Ken Z)

**1995 OFFICERS OF THE ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB**

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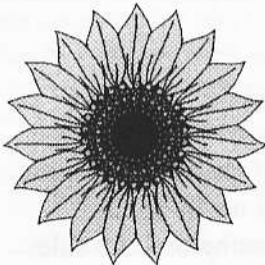
The Arkansas Railroad Club is a non-profit organization that meets on the second Sunday of the month. This month we will meet on Sunday, AUGUST 13 at the Twin City Bank Building on Main Street in North Little Rock. We are a chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. Programs are presented.

The **ARKANSAS RAILROADER** is the monthly publication of the Arkansas Railroad Club and is generally mailed in time to be received before the monthly meetings. In order to receive this publication, you must be a member of the Club. Current dues are \$20/year for Arkansas residents and also \$20/year for out-of-state. The **RAILROADER** is mailed to all members automatically.

If you would like to join, send your check made out to the "Arkansas Railroad Club" to: ATTN:Treasurer, ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB, P.O. Box 9151, North Little Rock AR 72119. You may also join the National Railway Historical Society through our Club by paying \$14/year more, or \$34/year.

Editor of the **ARKANSAS RAILROADER** is Ken Ziegenbein. Everything having to do with the **ARKANSAS RAILROADER** should be sent to the address below, ATTN:Editor. Please let me know if your address changes, as **NEWSLETTERS CANNOT BE FORWARDED.**

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Dues are \$20/year per individual. Dues are always due JANUARY 1ST of each year and apply to the calendar year. You may also join the National Historical Railway Society through our club by paying \$14/year more (total payment for both club membership and NRHS membership would be \$34 per year).

Membership entitles you to receive the **ARKANSAS RAILROADER** for the term of your membership. It is published monthly. Send the coupon below to our address in the center of this page.

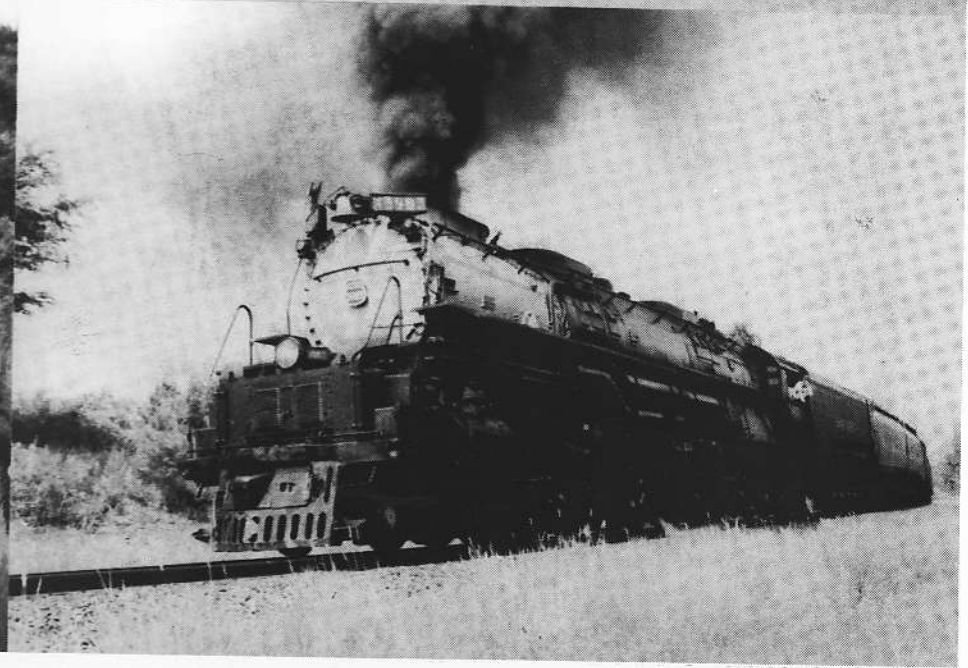
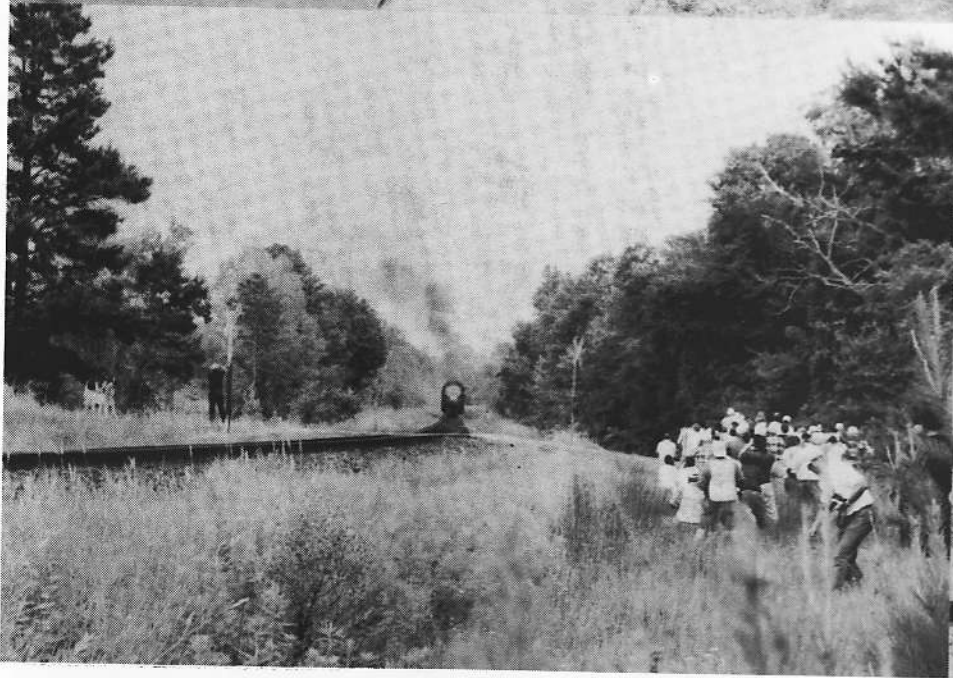
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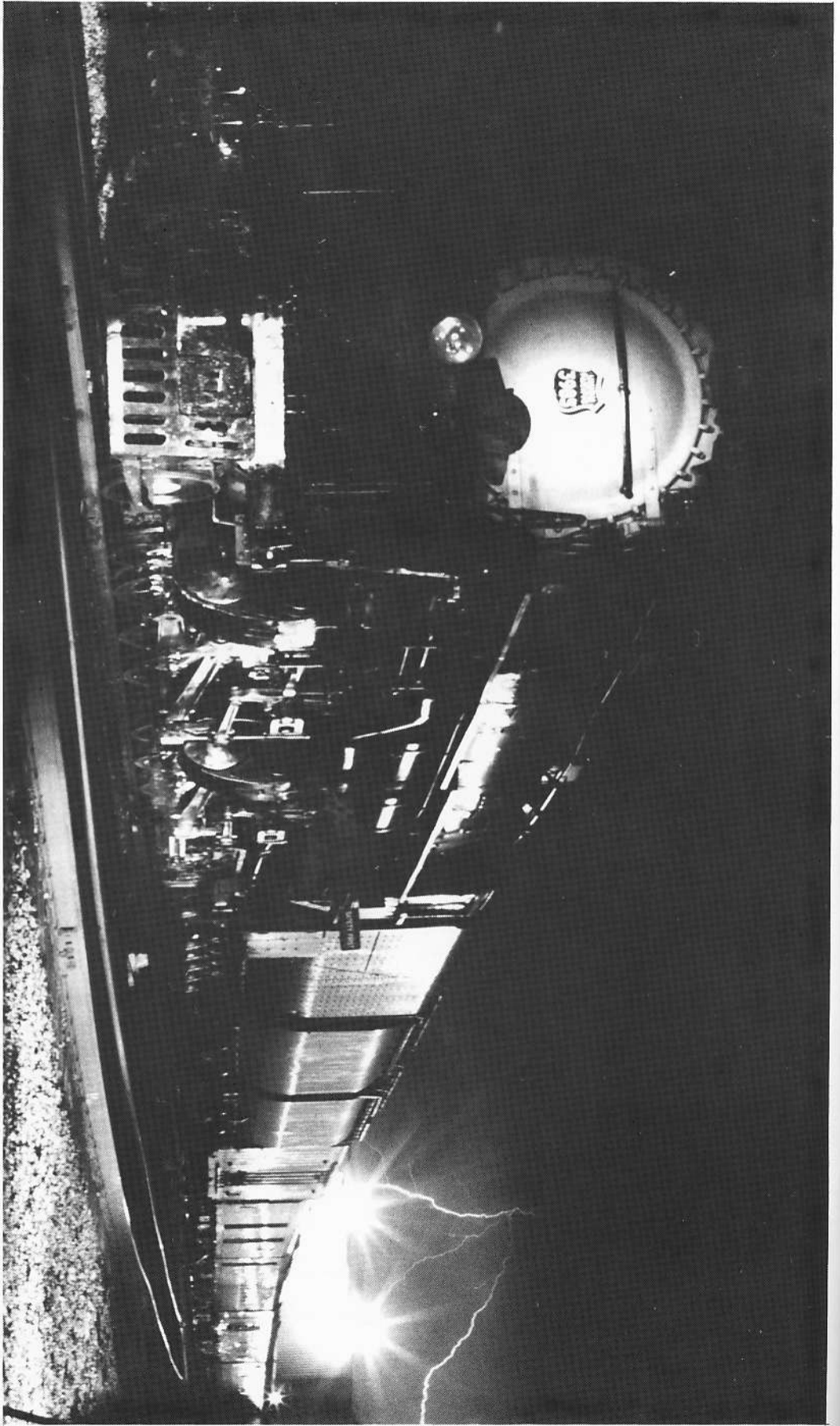
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**TOP LEFT** - Challenger arrives in North Little Rock about 2:30 p.m. June 4. **TOP RIGHT** - Train parked over the Pike Avenue bridge in North Little Rock waiting for freights to clear before backing into the business tracks. **BOTTOM LEFT** - Photo runby somewhere in northeast Texas on June 8. **BOTTOM RIGHT** - Passing the line of photographers, upgrade. (Ken Ziegenbein photos)





*Union Pacific's Challenger No. 3985 spends the night of June 5 in the railroad's North Little Rock yard. A thunderstorm moving north of the yard provides a dramatic light show. (Photo by David Hoge and is © David Hoge and the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. This photo may NOT be printed elsewhere without the written permission of David Hoge and the Democrat-Gazette)*