

The *EAST COAST CHAMPION*

July 2002

PRESIDENT'S MEMO TO STOCKHOLDERS

The journey to see the Walnut Valley (Garden) Railway in Ron Halverstadt's front yard, side yard, and his back porch (closed in of course) was quite a fun experience. Over the period of our visit, Ron operated at least five different trains, one of which was a double-headed steam. Ron and his wife Mary have enhanced the railway with several structures and nice plantings. It was a fun morning for all of us who were there. A big thanks to Ron and Mary for inviting us.

I noticed in the TV guide for PBS Ch. 24 (locally cable Ch. 20) that there are a couple of railway programs on Sunday, July 7, 8 p.m. – *Rockies by Rail*, and at 9 p.m. – *Railway Adventures Across Australia*. Sounds as if it could be an entertaining evening.

It was good to see Bill Hurst again at our last meeting. Bill brought a British Columbia Rail Conductor's hat which was raffled, and Jerry Sheehan won. Bill also donated a book that we will raffle at a later meeting. Thanks Bill for the hat and book.

At the July meeting, the book to be raffled is *Yesterday and Today: A History of the Chicago & North Western Railway System 1910* (plus map) compiled by W. H. Stennett. This is a history and fact book – looks interesting. I have seen it for sale on the Internet for \$75.

How many of you caught a glimpse of Bob McMillion on TV about a week ago driving the Brevard Zoo train with its new paint job?

A big thank you again to Jerry Sheehan for providing the display of railroad memorabilia during the month of June at the Cocoa Beach Library.

I received a post card from George Gillette. He said he rode three different steam railroads on his way to Michigan.

Thanks to Dick Alkus for the video *Steam Giants* that he showed at the June meeting. It was a good look at the era of big steam.

See you at the next meeting.

Until the 8th,
Stop, Look, & Listen,
Chuck

MINUTES FROM THE JUNE MEETING

President Chuck Billings called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM on June 10, 2002. The chapter had no guests at this month's meeting. The president did however recognize attendees Bill Hurst, Ron Halverstadt, and Bob Robinson whom we have not seen for sometime.

Bob Selle reported that chapter member Jim Lawless passed away. Chuck brought a sympathy card for those present to sign.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - The minutes of the May meeting as published in the newsletter were approved without correction. The motion to approve was made by Jerry Sheehan and seconded by Dick Alkus.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Bob Selle gave the monthly Treasurer's report.

OLD BUSINESS – President Billings reported that the Brevard Zoo's railroad relocation went very well. So much progress was made the first work weekend that the second weekend of work was cancelled. Chapter members who volunteered were Bill McCord, Larry King, Jerry Sheehan, and Chuck Billings.

Saturday June 15 Ron Halverstadt will host the chapter at his home to see his garden railroad from 10 AM until 2 PM.

NEW BUSINESS – The Cocoa Beach Library requested that the chapter provide a display of railroad memorabilia. Jerry Sheehan and Chuck Billings set up a display for them. The display will be available for viewing through the end of the month of June.

REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS – Bob Selle reported that Boston Mills, the publisher of the new Edition of *Speedway to Sunshine*, has filed chapter 11 bankruptcy. They have however received permission to publish the book. The depot hobby shop in Titusville has ordered 40 copies and Seth Bramson, the author, is still planning a book signing there. Bob made a motion that the chapter purchase a copy to donate to the Cocoa library. Jerry Sheehan seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Bob Sowden again donated a book *Louisville & Nashville Steam Locomotives* by Richard Prince to be raffled off. The winner of the raffle was Harlan Hannah (OK! Honest, the raffle is not fixed!) . The raffle raised \$40 for the chapter treasury.

A second raffle was held for a British Columbia Rail Conductors Hat donated by Bill Hurst. Jerry Sheehan won the hat. The raffle brought in an additional \$23 for the treasury.

PROGRAM – Dick Alkus showed a video dealing primarily with articulated locomotives. Titled Steam Giants.

Harlan Hannah, Secretary

THE ELECTRIC NOTEPAD

by Dave Klein

Your intrepid reporter attended the Ocala Trolley Meet at the end of May; once again, a good time was had by all. The Electric Railway Clubs of Florida sponsored the meet. Trolley modules in 1/2", G, O and HO scales were on display again. A few videos and parts were purchased; you can't attend any sort of railroadians show without lightening your wallet.

An "informed source" gave me an update on the Tampa Streetcar. Just about all of the track is in place and the poles are up. A lot of the wire is up, too. Essentially, the system is about complete, except for the CSX grade crossing. As noted before, the insurance problem was averted by the use of a watchman at the crossing, but a new glitch has sprung up. The CSX is concerned that the wire height may be too low! They are concerned that if the CSX moved double-stack or hi-cube cars over this crossing, it would snag the wire. True, this is a lightly-used freight spur, but you never know, especially if more cargo ships dock at the nearby piers. If you raise the wire, the poles might not reach! One solution to that is to lengthen the poles. If the poles are still too short, that requires trolley pole towers be added to the cars to raise the pole bases. A lot of Birney cars had these towers if the wire was higher than the 20-22 foot "normal" wire height. Supposedly, there still is no carbarn or the required trackage. A test of one of the cars found some shorts. Local media has pointed to cost overruns already, but supposedly the American Public Transit Association will still hold their meeting at the Tampa Marriott in mid-October and they have been promised trolley rides! The only thing they need now is a power problem. Don't even think Enron!

Here we go again! The politicians have found the diesel railcar solution for light rail again. A proposal for operation on CSX tracks through Volusia, Orange, and Seminole counties. Unless you can separate the right of way (via interlocking) or mandate that no freights operate during the day (a la San Diego), the railcars have to be RDC's or equivalent. I can't see a RegioSprinter without some protection from freights. But it can be a cheap way to get your foot in the door to light rail.

I can't believe what's available on eBay! As some of you know, the "power car" of Disney World's Mark IV Red Monorail is on the auction site. This is probably the older version, the type that is being reused in Las Vegas. What do you do with only the front of the train?

Microsoft is getting competition to their Train Simulator; a number of them advertise in Trains and Railroad magazines. I've also noticed that a number of railroad videos have been transferred to DVD; no trolley stuff, yet. I'm constantly amazed at the number of videos out there. As a teenager, the only place you'd see railroad or trolley movies advertised was from outfits such as Blackhawk Films. Audio was from the Railroad Record Club or from a few museum groups. Now, just about any railfan's home movies are available, remastered with color correction and sound or music added. At first, you'd pay a dollar a minute for transferred home movies; today you pay half that and the tapes come (literally) with all of the bells and whistles!

Speaking about games; there's a Thomas The Tank Engine game that comes with a throttle simulator that fits on top of your PC's keyboard....The fans in England (called Trainspotters) can also get British Rail info on a pair of CD's costing £20 from www.guildsoft.co.uk.

It's happened again: workers digging a foundation for a new library in Jacksonville, Oregon, found three tunnels that were forgotten. They were for a marble works, a gold mine, and for a railroad. How do you forget a tunnel, let alone three? How do you forget a tunnel to a gold mine? See you next time!

Interesting Rail News

from trains.com "News Wire" (www.trains.com)

Western wildfires spare Class 1s

Despite the number of large wildfires burning in the West – particularly in Colorado and New Mexico – Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe report that their operations are not affected today. The fire at Glenwood Springs, Colo., over the weekend shut down UP's former Rio Grande Moffat Route from around 5 p.m. Sunday to 8 a.m. Monday, spokesman Mike Furtney said. Amtrak detoured the California Zephyrs over UP via Wyoming on Sunday, but all Western long-distance trains are operating normally today, Amtrak spokesman Howard Riefs said.

Is refinement of "Acela" name in the offing?

Although it has been reported that Amtrak President and CEO David Gunn wants to drop the name "Acela" from everything but the high-speed *Acela Express* trains, an Amtrak spokeswoman says that's news to her. "Unfortunately, that appears to be just a rumor," Amtrak spokeswoman Karen Dunn said yesterday. "If that's something he plans to do, he hasn't told anyone within the company."

Gunn reportedly has not yet made up his mind, although he's said to be no fan of the Acela name. Many observers have been critical of Amtrak's Acela rebranding program, which restructured Northeast Corridor trains under three different levels of "Acela" service: *Acela Express*; *Acela Regional*, which replaced NortheastDirect service; and *Acela Commuter*, a term that never really replaced the Philadelphia-New York Clocker service, as intended. Some travelers have been confused by the terminology and have walked away disappointed when their ticket on the "Acela" landed them on a conventional Northeast Corridor Acela Regional train, rather than the *Acela Express*.

NRHS Historian Hugh Gibb dies at 83

Hugh R. Gibb, the national historian for the National Railway Historical Society, who had been involved in the organization for more than six decades, died on June 3 in St. Petersburg, Fla. He was 83. Gibb, who joined the Philadelphia Chapter in 1936, had been the NRHS national historian since 1965. He served as NHRS secretary from 1938-39, 1941-42, and 1943-45; treasurer from 1947-1957; and Bulletin Editor in 1943. He also served as secretary and trustee for the Library of American Transportation, which was later renamed the NRHS Library. Gibb's wife, Grace, died December 2000. He is survived by two daughters, Margo and Victoria, and a family friend, Donna Bossi.

Steam group to retire Frisco 4-8-2 No. 1522

The St. Louis Steam Train Association has decided to retire Frisco 4-8-2 Mountain No. 1522 after this year, citing the increasingly difficult economic situation facing the operators of steam locomotives. "No matter how hard we try, how much our group wants to continue operating the engine, or how businesslike we attempt to run our organization, the simple fact is we can no longer sustain the economic requirements for operating and maintaining this remarkable piece of equipment in today's world," Robert C. Meier, president of the SLSTA, said in a press release.

The group's board of directors met to assess the prospects for future operation of the locomotive, which the group returned to service in 1988. The directors concluded that skyrocketing insurance premiums, the cost of doing mandated boiler work, and limited access to main lines for excursions made continued operation economically impossible. LSTA's Jeff Schmid said the group hopes to run a farewell trip in September or October. The locomotive made a March break-in run on Burlington Northern Santa Fe between St. Louis and West Quincy, Mo., to test mechanical work performed over the winter.

The group said its liability insurance costs would have more than doubled to \$150,000 after the policy expired on April 1. The locomotive's flue extension from the Federal Railroad Administration is set to expire in January, which means the flues must be removed and the boiler inspected – a process that could cost between \$75,000 and \$150,000, Schmid estimated. The insurance and overhaul costs, when combined with the limited possibility for excursions, were simply a knock-out economic blow for the all-volunteer organization. "Certainly this is not a happy time," said Jim Schwinkendorf, an SLSTA board member. "The crux of the situation is that whether it is a volunteer group or whatever, it has to run as a business. At some point it's an economic animal. The economics are just getting away."

Even under the best of circumstances, the group could only get the locomotive out on the main line a couple times per year. "You can't get a big enough train or run enough excursions to make up the cost," Schwinkendorf said. "We're not the first and we won't be the last to face these situations."

The SLSTA hopes it can arrange a farewell excursion this fall under Amtrak auspices, which would eliminate the insurance problem. Although the group has open lines of communication with Amtrak, it has not yet approached the railroad about sponsoring a trip.

Schmid said many founding members of the group have been giving up Saturdays for 17 years. It's a grind that has taken its toll. "It's a tough decision, but I'm ready for it to happen," Schmid said. "A lot of people in the group ran out of steam." Schwinkendorf, a retired BNSF executive, agreed. "Even with my railroad connections, it's getting harder to find train slots out there to run excursion trains on mainline railroads," he said. "When you're faced with those kind of things, it just gets to be more and more and more of an uphill battle every time. At some point you say, am I really having fun doing this?" He said the 1522 crew members can hold their heads high. "To have survived this long is amazing," he said. "It's really been an effort."

The pending dissolution of the SLSTA won't necessarily bury the 1522 forever. "If another group wants to come along, we've left them with a good engine, good equipment, and a chunk of cash to get started," Schmid said. An endowment will be established for the continued maintenance and preservation of the locomotive, and volunteers likely will continue to care for the 1522. It is owned by St. Louis County and is part of the collection at the Museum of Transportation.

Bill Withuhn, curator of transportation at the Smithsonian Institution, says the retirement of the 1522 should send a wakeup call to railfans. "Railfans, put your money where your hearts are," he said. "Buy the tickets and ride. And don't wait until next year."

CSX hires survey firm to help it improve service

CSX is getting a new kind of power, but not the kind found at the point of its trains. J.D. Power and Associates, to be exact. The firm, best known for its annual automotive surveys, will survey CSX customers to create a customer satisfaction index, CSX says. The findings will be used to help CSX improve its service. "Providing superior service to customers continues to be one of CSX's top priorities," said Mike Giftos, executive vice president and chief commercial officer. "J.D. Power and Associates will provide an honest evaluation of our services, which will guide us in our efforts toward reaching our goal of improved customer satisfaction." The first round of surveys will begin later this month and will continue monthly.

In crisis, Amtrak grabs headlines

Amtrak has received considerable media attention since announcing that it would have to shut down next month if it doesn't obtain a \$205 million loan. Amtrak President and CEO David Gunn appeared on PBS "Newshour with Jim Lehrer" on Thursday. The *New York Times* printed a question-and-answer story with Gunn on Sunday. Conservative columnist William F. Buckley wrote a piece in support of government subsidies of passenger service. And *The New York Times Magazine* carried a story, "Amtrak Must Die," which questioned the rationale for passenger rail service.

During his appearance with Lehrer, Gunn said it was fiscal reality – not a threat – that Amtrak would have to shut down if it can't land the loan. He repeated his assertion that Congress should not have issued the self-sufficiency requirement for Amtrak, and that the railroad should not have said it was possible to meet the goal. And he said that all routes lose money, not just long-distance trains.

In the Q&A with *The Times*, Gunn said the government should continue to subsidize passenger rail because it subsidizes other modes. He also said the company must remain whole, and that merely shutting down long-distance routes – as predecessor George Warrington had threatened – would not work. "Mathematically, there is no way you can take this company, carve it up, and get the service you require. The long-distance trains require subsidy, the Northeast Corridor requires less subsidy. The long-distance trains don't need that much capital, but the corridor needs lots of capital," Gunn said, noting that Congress would be unlikely to back the Northeast Corridor in the absence of a national system.

Buckley urged conservatives to obtain a broader perspective on rail service and the subsidies it requires. He concluded that: "The plan of Sen. [Fritz] Hollings is significantly to improve and to increase the availability of railroads, and he needs to justify doing this, at a cost of over \$5 billion per year, by persuading Congress and the public that however uneven the usufructs of rail travel to different parts of America, a national endowment is economically defensible, culturally desirable, and tangentially useful to the common defense."

In the *Times* magazine piece, self-described train lover John Tierney, a writer for the newspaper, questioned the need for Amtrak. The story was critical of its service and ongoing subsidies. "Sometimes a foamer needs to see that Amtrak is going nowhere," he concluded. "All it's doing is blocking the tracks."

Rick Harnish, executive director of the Midwest High Speed Rail Coalition, said he was frustrated with the story, which didn't really address the potential for rail to ease congestion on highways and in the air – something that will only increase in the coming years. "We have to somehow separate the issue of Amtrak from the issue of passenger rail policy. Until we do that, I don't think we'll move forward," he said. "The issue is not whether Amtrak should die or not, but how we should provide the type of high-quality rail service in areas where we want it."

The story highlighted, among other things, the poor on-time performance of the *Sunset Limited*. “For most Americans, trains are either unavailable or too inconvenient and expensive compared with planes or buses. Cutting the *Sunset Limited* might actually result in fewer trucks on the roads because it would be easier to ship freight by rail if Amtrak weren't given priority on the Union Pacific's tracks. What environmental or economic sense does it make to give 170 passengers on the *Sunset Limited* priority over a freight train that's keeping 500 trucks off the road?”

This made one Amtrak manager bristle. He noted that the *Sunset Limited* rarely gets priority, and that much of the train's delays can be attributed to interference by UP freights. “Clearly that is the worst-case example in the system,” Harnish said of the *Sunset*. “It's operating on very inadequate infrastructure ... It doesn't provide a very good case for what rail really can do.”

Cumbres & Toltec shutdown continues under Forest Service order

The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad remains shut down indefinitely due to a closure order issued by the U.S. Forest Service. Citing the extreme fire danger, the Forest Service ordered the railroad closed on June 7. The scenic line, which straddles the New Mexico-Colorado border, runs through the Carson National Forest in New Mexico and the Rio Grande National Forest in Colorado. Railroad officials had been hoping to meet with Forest Service officials to discuss ways the railroad could resume operation. Benjamin Romero, a spokesman for the Carson National Forest, said the closure will remain in effect indefinitely, and that no meetings had taken place between the railroad and Forest Service.

Durango & Silverton curtails operations due to fire concerns

The Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad curtailed operations effective today in response to the fire threat in tinder-dry Colorado. The railroad will operate steam trains only as far as Hermosa, instead of running the entire route to Silverton, at least through the Fourth of July holiday, said railroad spokeswoman Kristi Nelson Cohen. “We're dealing with extraordinary situation here in Durango,” she said. The Missionary Ridge fire has consumed 53,000 acres and is raging about two miles from the railroad, she noted.

This weekend the railroad was to add a fourth round-trip between Durango and Silverton. Instead, today it scaled back to running two daily round-trips between Durango and Hermosa, she said. Next week, it will add a diesel-powered excursion from Rockwood along the High Line above the Animas River, she said. And it will run the Animas River rail bus from Silverton to Elk Park. The railroad also will offer round-trip bus trips to Silverton, a town that depends on the railroad and the tourists it hauls. Passengers holding reservations will be issued full refunds or, if they chose to ride the train, 50% refunds, Nelson Cohen said.

The decision to scale back operations was a difficult one to reach, she said. “It was a very trying decision. We want to protect our forests, and the safety of our passengers,” she said. “Unfortunately, it has a huge economic impact on our entire community, not just the railroad.”

On a lighter note, she said the railroad has asked the Southern Ute tribe to join a spiritual dance and community prayer for rain. The event will be held tomorrow. The railroad beefed up its fire suppression measures this year, and was in contact almost daily with Forest Service and fire officials, Nelson Cohen said. The Forest Service approved of the fire prevention measures.

Quotable

“The railroad is a great business stand-alone.” --Robert W. Anestis, chairman and CEO of Florida East Coast, to shareholders at the company's annual meeting. The company had considered selling the railroad a few years ago, but now intends to hold onto the regional.

“Let me also point out that the \$20 million for passenger equipment repairs would be allocated to fix equipment that was damaged years ago. In one case, the damage occurred over 10 years ago! How can a train car wrecked more than 10 years ago today constitute an emergency repair need? As a matter of fact, over half of the money requested for emergency repairs is for equipment wrecked before 2001.” --U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., in a speech on the Senate floor earlier this week. McCain was critical of what he called pork-barrel spending contained in a supplemental budget bill – including the provision that would give Amtrak \$55 million to repair wreck-damaged equipment that has languished at the Beech Grove shop complex in Indiana. A total of \$43

million would go to repair the wreck-damaged equipment, which is necessary considering Amtrak's pressing car shortage since the Auto Train wreck.

"It would have made great salsa." --New Mexico State Police Officer James Frieze, quoted in the *El Paso Times* regarding the grade crossing collision between a Burlington Northern Santa Fe train carrying two tanks of liquid chile and a truck laden with onions on Wednesday in southern New Mexico. No one was injured, but the truck spilled its cargo.

"That's like Coca-Cola changing its great brand name into 'brown liquid in a bottle,' Acela, to me, is the room before the first floor." -- Amtrak President and CEO David Gunn, in a speech to the American Public Transit Association last week in Baltimore, on what he thinks of replacing the Metroliner name with Acela Express. The quote was reported by Washington Post transportation writer Don Phillips. Gunn said too much has been invested in the Acela Express name to replace it, but added that he may strip the Acela name from other Northeast Corridor services.

"Remember tough times don't last forever – tough people do. You are working hard and staying focused on safety – thank you." -- Amtrak Chief Operating Officer Stan Bagley Jr. in a letter to Amtrak employees last week, congratulating them for reducing operating rules violations by a third during May, and encouraging them to keep up the focus on safety.

"Growing up in England, one of my hobbies was trainspotting." -- Canadian Transport Minister David Collenette, in a speech last week at the Canadian Pacific Railway Regional and Short Line Conference in Quebec City.

"We recruit from right, left and center. We do not limit ourselves to the rail sector, where there has been too much in-breeding." -- Canadian National CEO Paul M. Tellier, in a speech to Wall Street analysts last week, in which he noted that the railway recruits change-oriented managers, the Canadian Press reported.

"They're playing Russian roulette with our properties and our lives. All my neighbors feel the same. I don't know why they're allowing that train to run." --Karen Jobe, who lives 12 miles north of Durango, Colo., and is angered that the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad is still running despite the extreme fire danger in the area. She was quoted in the Durango Herald.

"I'm concerned about people losing their homes. But I'm also concerned about my 200 employees and the 100 businesses in Silverton and the \$60 million businesses in Durango would lose." --Al Harper, chairman and chief executive officer of the Durango & Silverton, quoted in the Durango Herald before the railroad's decision to curtail operations.

PROGRAM MANIFESTS

UPCOMING CHAPTER PROGRAMS

JULY – MONDAY the 8TH, 7PM. Video: "Great American Train Rides, Vol. I." Features eight western railroads, six of them steam – great photography and scenery – very entertaining – Chuck Billings.

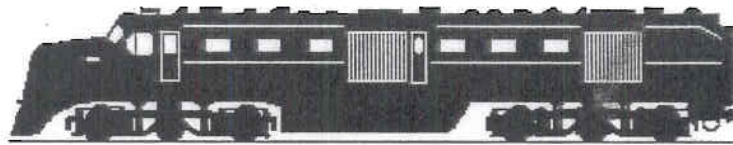
AUGUST – MONDAY the 12TH, 7PM. Program to be announced. (Any volunteers?)

CURRENT & UPCOMING FLORIDA EAST COAST EVENTS

SEPTEMBER – SATURDAY the 7TH, 9am - 2pm. Train & Toy Show, Eau Gallie Civic Center, 1551 Highland Ave, Melbourne. Admission - \$3.00. Children under 10 free with parent. (321) 453-4125.

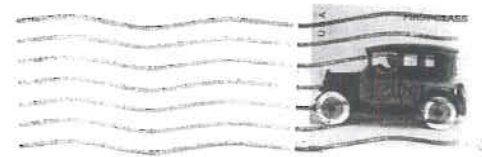
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<http://www.ribbonrail.com/art/diesel/engine-2.gif>

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NEXT MEETING: Monday, July 8, 2002, 7:00 PM
Central Brevard Library & Reference Center
308 Forrest Avenue, Cocoa (321) 633-1792
PROGRAM: Video, *Great American Train Rides, Vol. I*

