

Roundhouse Notes

Paducah Chapter
National Railway Historical Society
March 2013

Our Column this month was written by Tammy Wood, (Bill Wood's daughter -in-law), featuring her perspective of their first trip on Amtrak with family:

First Trip on Amtrak Tammy Wood

Our first trip on Amtrak was exciting and a great experience. As a mother of three boys it seemed like I would need to include quite a bit of entertainment, however even though we did use some of it they seemed to enjoy some creative times and others to connect with some new friends on the trip.

We started the journey at the station in St. Paul Minnesota at 10:00pm on a Saturday evening. As we waited for the train to arrive we did take advantage of some card games. When we were able to board and get settled into our seats, the boys were ready to try out sleeping in seats. For the most part they settled in quickly as they saw other passengers already sleeping. The swaying of the train and their ability to adapt were quite amazing as we rolled out to the open plains of northwest Minnesota and North Dakota.

Upon awakening we were up to exploring our options for breakfast and discovered the lounge car's breakfast items. Then the real fun began. The trip out didn't really consist of much watching of scenery for the boys as they were excited to be in the train and discovering the ability to wander to the bathroom as well as

to the lounge car looking for that open booth to play games. Eating in the Dining car was fun also, the meals although a little pricey were rather good.

Making friends with other kids that sat around us was another great adventure. They played and shared snacks most of the trip out and had different games they made up with toys they had brought. As we got closer to Glacier they did look out and watch the scenery some, but this soon lost its spark. We did meet some very nice people on the train and enjoyed learning about their reason for riding the train. There were scout groups, people going from point to point, and fellow travelers much like us wanting to experience Amtrak and visiting some beautiful country.

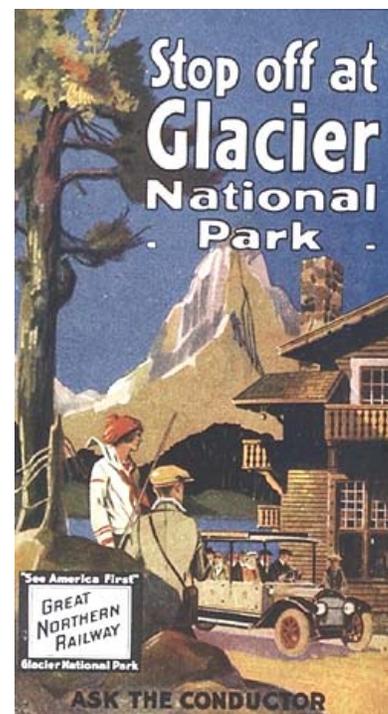
Upon arriving at our destination we learned that the train was early, although we were later than our tickets had indicated. Thus making us wonder what all the delays could have been. Needless to say we found out on the way home, that the train has varying reasons for delay and one that apparently was more common than one would know being a derailment.

We waited a few hours at our pick up spot on the way home before boarding. Once we were on board we found out about the derailment and the slow start to the trip. The boys adjusted well and we had a pleasant trip back even with the delay of almost 12 hours. The stop

was planned well in a small town so there were some things to do to pass the time. Then the overnight hours were spent much like the way out.

I know there were people angry and frustrated by the delay, however it was out of the hands of Amtrak and they did a great job of accommodating us.

The most enjoyable part about the trip is being able to travel that distance and really spending time visiting and enjoying the scenery of the mountains instead of navigating them for ourselves. It would be worth doing again.



NEWS AND VIEWS

Bob Johnston

NEWS AND VIEWS:

PAL: As of February 28th, four of the newly acquired SD 70s were on the spur behind the Caller's Office, another was nearby outside of the Diesel Shop, and three were seen at Progress Rail in Mayfield. The other eight are somewhere in South Yard, but cannot be seen from the road. The P&L seems to be, "making haste slowly," with their "new" engines.....The Bluegrass I and the power car were sent to Frankfort (via Louisville-CSX-R. J. Corman) for the annual General Assembly Reception on February 12th. Also on hand were the R. J. Corman's office- reception and other R.J.C. cars. CSX and NS also participated but did not furnish cars. Reportedly attendance was good; chapter member John Deming was on hand as one of P&L's hosts, and a delegation of business and governmental leaders from Paducah also attended.....While circling South Yard looking for the other SD70s, I noticed the tracks were full of coal trains. Authorities report that coal business has been up sharply on the PAL because the low water on the Mississippi River that has hindered the movement of barge traffic, has diverted the coal through this gate-way.....In the February NEWS AND VIEWS, I reported seeing an empty CSX coal train on the P&I. Since then I saw another train of empty CSX hoppers heading into the terminal at Grand Rivers pulled by CN engines, and have other reports of the same, but haven't yet found out what it means....Recently, local news media reported that the old metals plant at the Atomic Energy Plant had been razed, and that the contaminated scrap would go out by rail, meaning PAL, but again, haven't heard any time schedule.....On February 27th, a picture was posted on the internet of a

continuous rail train operating at Summit, near Eastview and Big Clifty on the northern portion of the railroad; it was pulled by the University of Louisville locomotive.....PAL CEO, Tony Reck, was recently in the hospital for hip surgery, and is recuperating at home (he may be back at work by now).

VMV: Reports in local news media on February 6th indicated the adding of 25 positions at VMV. It was not clear whether these 25 jobs were the same ones announced in July 2012 or additional ones. However, Bob Pedersen, V.P and General Manager of VMV has said that they are actively seeking mechanics and electricians, and that they are considering having a job fair to speed up the process.....Some of the units seen around VMV include Quebec & Gati-neau SD 38 2006; FURX 3004(one of several green & silver SD40-2s that have been stored behind the shops for at least two years); and several switchers including CP 1271, GMTX 71, and NREX 2344. Also seen in North Yard was Belt Railroad of Chicago switcher 532. VMV seems to have found a niche in rebuilding switchers which have found a home in industries, after having fallen out of favor with the larger railroads (including PAL).

MID-AMERICA CORRIDOR: Interest and activity in the Norfolk-Southern Corridor has been on the back burner for some time, but on February 14th, NS ran their first train over the CN and the West Tennessee. It was an empty auto-rack train, and was apparently a test with hopefully more to come. The joint plan first announced by CN and NS in February 2009, is for NS to run trains over CN's Edgewood Cut-Off, using the P&I bridge, and then at Fulton, take the West Tennessee back through

Jackson, to home rails at Corinth, MS. Northbound at Fulton they would use the old passenger main line through Cairo. CN was to receive similar concessions elsewhere; but other railroads such as BNSF (& PAL) objected, and that, and perhaps the economy, seems to have delayed the project, although considerable money has been spent to upgrade the West Tenn, as well as interchange tracks in Fulton.

CROSSING PROBLEM: On February 12, I talked to a CN Signal Maintainer at the crossing at Central Avenue, and asked him about why the work on the installation of the gates at the Pines Road Crossing had abruptly stopped last year. He explained that it bogged down because it was originally planned to close N. 34th St. which ends at the crossing, but the city refused to do so. Otherwise it would be necessary to install a third gate which would involve not only the extra expense of the gate, but also that of moving high voltage electric lines that cross Pines Road just west of the tracks.

CASEY'S BIRTHDAY: On March 14th, the Casey Jones Home and Railroad Museum in Jackson, TN will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of the famous engineer, John Luther "Casey" Jones, who was born in Missouri, but grew up just down the road from Paducah, in Cayce, KY, from which he derived his nick-name. He became famous after the I.C. *Cannonball Express*, on which he was engineer, rear-ended a stalled freight at Vaughan, MS on the night of April 30, 1900. Instead of jumping, Casey stayed in the cab to slow his train, and became immortalized by the *Ballad of Casey Jones*, "written by his friend, roundhouse worker and engine wiper, Wallace Saunders, and later sung (and changed) by many other

artists. For those interested, we have a file on Casey and the accident in the museum. The celebration at the museum in Jackson will be from 9:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. and will include free admission to the museum and many attractions and activities.

RESONDEK RAILROAD: You may recall that our January meeting program was presented by Mr. Todd Phillips, of the Respondek Railroad, on that holding company's operations, including the Fredonia Valley Railroad. On page 17 of the March TRAINS MAGAZINE was an article and picture of newly painted Resondek GP7 415 that is going to the Fredonia Valley to haul rock from the quarry to the PAL connection at Princeton.

ED ELLIS: Also, in that issue of TRAINS, was an article on Ed Ellis' Iowa Pacific reaching the Pacific coast with the Watsonville & Santa Cruz R.R. Ed Ellis started his railroad career as a brakeman for the I.C. in Paducah, and parlayed that into starting new short line conglomerates (from which he was fired by one), then setting up Amtrak's mail and express that became a \$ 150 million a year business, but that for a combination of reasons was discontinued by Amtrak. His Iowa Pacific conglomerate has become a freight, tourist, and tour line empire that has made Ed and his partners rich. He likes to paint many of his locomotives and passenger cars in I.C. chocolate & orange with the Green Diamond predominate. He visited Paducah on the High Iron passenger special in 2011, and his latest venture is starting Pullman Rail Journeys which involves selling passenger sleeper service with specially restored cars and high end service, on the rear of the *City of New Orleans*.

WKMS RADIO RAILROAD PROGRAM: On Sunday, March 3rd, from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m., Murray State's PBS station ran a special program on railroad history in West Kentucky called *Kentucky High Iron, The Story of Four Rivers Rail*. It involved

an interview with chapter member and author, Cliff Downey, while riding the *City of New Orleans* between Carbondale and Fulton, and a phone interview with this writer on the subject of the history of laying track, (about which I am admittedly not an expert), Todd Hatton, the News Editor of the station also visited the museum where he interviewed me and John Maxfield. The program also had segments regarding the Cadiz Railroad, the rise and decline of Earlington, in Hopkins County as a railroad town, and a segment recorded in Paducah's South Yard, partly narrated by former Mayor, Albert Jones, about the 1935 murder of I. C. Special Agent, Richard Kelley, by a boxcar thief. Kelley's daughter, Janis Cromwell, who was a small child at the time of her father's death, lives in Paducah. Hatton says the program will be re-broadcast, but has not decided on a time. However, he promises to mail me a disc, which I will have available.

MUSEUM: The museum re-opened (softly) on Friday, March 1st. Major changes include moving all the Paducah Shop displays, including the hose cart, to the rear where the N Gauge and the PAL displays had been. The P&L display is on the wall where the communications were, and the CTC is now in the corner where the shop display was. In the new open space, Amy has moved the conductor, engineer, and track-worker mannequins with descriptions of those jobs.

We have to get ready for two big events: "Little Obie," on March 9th, and "Rotary on the Move," on March 12th, at 5:30 p.m. The latter is a new program of the Rotary Club of Paducah in which the Rotarians visit sites of organizations they monetarily support. It is a change to present our museum to many Paducah business and governmental leaders who may not have seen it previously. It is essential that all members possible show up to help at those times. March 12th is a regular meeting night, and that will be

our program for March.

The new computerized cash register system is now in operation, both for admissions and in the gift shop, and everyone possible should familiarize themselves with it. It is not as complicated as it sounds, and will help record keeping and reduce errors. We are indebted to Charles Gibbons for obtaining the equipment at little or no cost, setting it up, and making the tutorial to show how to use it.

SPECIAL NRHS NOTE: The recent reorganization of the NRHS includes the formation of an Advisory Council. Information is open to all members on the NRHS website <https://admin.nrhs.com>, and is NOT password protected and it is encouraged that all members avail themselves of this opportunity to become better informed of what goes on in the NRHS.

RAILROAD HISTORICAL MEETINGS: The N.C. & St. L. Ry Preservation Society will meet in Nashville on May 17-18, with activities centered around the Tennessee Central Museum. Further info at website [http://www.ncstl.com/.....](http://www.ncstl.com/) and the CSXT Historical Society will meet on June 7,8,9, in Winchester, KY. Info at <http://csxthsociety.org/>

Roundhouse Notes



Published monthly by the Paducah Chapter, National Railway Historical Society. Send your news, photos to:

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This Month The Rotary
Club is touring our the
Museum!



TUESDAY
March 12th
5:30 PM
At the Railroad
Museum

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& Charles Gibbons
3409 Central Ave
Paducah KY 42001