

Whistle Stop



Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum
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Preserving Our Region's Railroad Heritage

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A man's home is his castle ...

... and this is Gary Price's other castle, away from home. Depicted is camp car CR62076. To read about life on the road for MoW workers, and how living conditions evolved (and IMPROVED!), go to page 3.

February 27th Membership Meeting

The second Watauga Valley RHS&M Membership Meeting of the year will be held **Monday, February 27, 2012** at 6:30 pm at the Johnson City Public Library, 100 West Millard St., Johnson City, TN. Our program this month will feature the 40th Anniversary of Amtrak. As always, this will be a program you do not want to miss. Bring a friend out for a relaxing evening with your fellow members.

Member Notes

by Nancy Jewell

We are glad to report that Frank Rhorer, Greeneville, TN, has recovered and is "back on the job" after recent surgery. Take care, Frank.

Please let us know of any members, families or friends who would welcome a card or a phone call to help them have a better day. Call the office phone at (423) 753-5797 or Nancy Jewell at (423) 282-0918. Thanks for helping us keep in touch.

Membership Renewal

If you did not pay your membership dues, your membership expired 12/31/11. Please renew ASAP to keep your membership current. Dues Classes:

Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum	Indiv. \$20.00	Spouse \$5.00
Watauga Valley NRHS	Indiv. \$56.00	Spouse \$5.00
Watauga Valley Railroad Heritage Alliance	Indiv. \$36.00	Spouse \$5.00
Joining all three	Indiv. \$71.00	Spouse \$10.00

You can turn your dues in at the February 27, 2012 Membership Meeting or mail to: Membership Chairman, Watauga Valley RSHM, P. O. Box 432, Johnson City, TN. 37605-0432.

Volunteers Needed!

As of Press Time, the *Great Smoky Mountain Spring Excursion* is over half sold out. However, volunteers for host positions on the train are still needed. Please sign up for this fun-filled activity at our next Membership meeting.

Changes to our web site are coming!

Changes to our web site, including a new address, are in the design phase to reflect the organization of the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society & Museum. The new site will also reflect our continued affiliation with the NRHS. When complete, notifications will be emailed. Automatic forwarding to the new site will be implemented. In the meantime, please continue to use and enjoy our current site.

PROGRAMS FOR 2012

We're in need of programs for our General Membership meetings each month in 2012. If you have any program material, including railroad slides, a video, a DVD, or know of a possible speaker, contact Nick White, the Program Director, at any meeting; call us at (423) 753-5797; or e-mail wataugavalley@embarqmail.com.

Home Sweet Home (In a Box)

by Gary Price

At first glance one might think that I am referring to the life of a vampire roaming the earth by night, sleeping in a coffin by daylight. But no, alas, I am referring to my living quarters that I retire to at the end of a long day of working on the railroad, even though on more than one occasion I have referred to my bunk as a coffin. I live in a rail-mounted camp car.

Camp cars have been around as long railroads themselves. They are portable houses on rails that have housed railroad employees who participated in the building and maintenance of the nation's rail-system from the first time that steel wheels have rolled on steel rails. Over the years the camp cars have evolved from vintage boxcars and passenger coaches to more modern trailers on rails.

Today, all the major railroads have effectively done away with the entire camp car society, and place their men in the comfort and convenience of a major hotel chain, except one railroad, NORFOLK SOUTHERN, and I wouldn't have it any other way. To me the camp cars are my all-access paid, front row ticket to the best action and places that NORFOLK SOUTHERN has to offer. And I don't have to sleep next to an ice machine.



When I first hired on to NORFOLK SOUTHERN way back in 1996, the last thing that crossed my mind was that I would have to live in a camp car. I didn't know what to expect, but I soon found out as I arrived on property and learned that my second home would be in NS-HT-92-601, a fifth wheel, rubber tired camp car that was moved from site to site by a semi truck. There were six men that were housed in this trailer.

The trailer had a small compartment

that we used as a common room with a table, a small fridge and a TV. As you walk through the door, you would enter the shower room that had a shower on each side of the hallway. This was followed by three sleeping compartments. Each of these compartments consisted of bunk beds, two closets and a sink. If you slept in the rear compartment, you had your own private door; the other two compartments had employees walking through them

as they came and went. Due to the bunk bed arrangement, the employees who had to sleep on the top bunk were up next to the heat and A/C ducts, so they burned up in the winter and froze in the summer. Bottom bunks were a premium. Toilet facilities were in the form of a standard Port-A-John, not a pleasant experience in the worst of weather conditions. I spent a year here before having to relocate to a rail gang, and they had the same trailer set up except the trailers were smaller and only housed four employees in each one.



A taste of the hotel life.

Not all of NORFOLK SOUTHERN Maintenance of Way employees are housed in camp cars. In March of 1997 I got the call to report to a small surfacing unit in Norfolk. [contin'd on next page]

This gang and several small gangs like it are housed in comfort of mainstream hotels. This was short lived as in June of that year I was awarded my first machine on the railroad and I had to pack my bags and report to Kimball, WV. To a rail gang, when I pulled into the property, I was excited to see the long string of green boxcars that had been rebuilt into camp



cars. Some of them still had NORFOLK and WESTERN markings on them. I moved into car #NS995261. The boxcar arrangement was completely different than anything I had experienced. It



was partitioned into two sections with doors on both sides in the middle for the only access. One side of the car housed eight men in one large room in four bunk beds positioned in the four corners of the room. There were eight closets, two at the head of each set of bunk beds. Nothing like a peaceful night's sleep with eight different men snoring their respective turns, along with other noises and things that go bump in the night. On the other side of the wall is the common room that had a full size fridge, a table on one wall and

three sinks down the other. At the rear of the compartment were two showers ... for eight men. Bathroom facilities were outdoor Johnnies as well. I stayed here until December and it wasn't long before I had enough seniority to hold a job back on the original Virginia Division gang that I hired onto in 1996. Ironically, I ended up in the same trailer that I started out in.

CONRAIL leftovers.

The division of CONRAIL in 1999 brought some interesting equipment to the NORFOLK SOUTHERN roster. In 2000 we learned that we would be trading in our rubber tired trailers for former CONRAIL rail mounted camp cars that had originally been built for Amtrak in 1971. These were essentially house trailers mounted onto former PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD flat cars. Some of these flats had 1936 builder's dates on them. These to slept eight men, but they were separated into groups of four on either end of the car. There was a common room, and a shower/sink room located in the middle of the car. And yes, we still had outdoor bathroom privileges. Living conditions were not the greatest. An avid campaign by the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE) to get rid of the camp cars on NORFOLK SOUTHERN brought attention to living conditions that we employees had to face. (One campaign proved that a prisoner had more living space than a NORFOLK SOUTHERN employee). The campaign failed, but NORFOLK SOUTHERN realized that something had to be done, and the cars began to be cycled through the car shops and completely rebuilt and updated to the most modern standards.

My brand new second home.

When I found out that my new camp car #CR62076 [photo on front page] was to be delivered in the summer of 2009 at Front Royal, VA. I was truly excited, and I was not disappointed. The new and improved trailer now housed only four employees, gone forever was those tiny bunk beds that they expected full grown men to sleep in. Now we had a private compartment for two men on each end of the car, with one bed and a closet on either side of the wall. Each compartment has its own small fridge and a place for a TV. We now [continued on next page]



have Direct TV satellite system installed in each compartment for entertainment and news. In the center of the car are two separate compartments that house one shower, one sink, and yes ... wait for it ... our own indoor TOILET! Hallelujah! Finally, no more getting fully dressed, just to make a midnight run to a Port-A-John to do my business.

Also included in our camp car train are a flat car with a generator; a bunk and storage trailer for our two cooks; a complete kitchen trailer; and a diner trailer for breakfast, meetings and supper.

All in all, I am satisfied with my new living quarters supplied to me by NORFOLK SOUTHERN, but some of the younger employees (who never had to sleep in conditions mentioned earlier) still pester the Union to try to get rid of camp cars and place us in hotels. But as for me, I am content to pull up my chair and watch the endless parade of NORFOLK SOUTHERN trains as they roll past a mere 6 feet away from my Home Sweet Home (in a box).

Spring Street Coach Yard Mechanical Report

by Bob Yaple

Cleanup of the box car and containers has been going on for the last couple of months. We have been experiencing some low voltage power problems at the yard. We recently had the Johnson City Power Board on site to check out our power situation. At this time they are still trying to find the problem.

Rolling Stock

The *Clinchfield* coach remains at Spencer.

Restoration work on the *Crescent Harbor* continues. The water heater is complete. Both hot and cold water systems have been air tested. Work has been progressing on the Rest Rooms including rebuilding the floor and installing plumbing and commodes. The electric sewage pumps are installed underneath the car. Work is also going on with restoration of the pull down beds.

The *Moultrie* Dining Car has arrived back at the Spring Street Yard in Jonesborough after a 5-month work out on the road. Plans this spring are to relay the carpet in the dining area.

Another Washington, DC Rail Excursion!!!

Due to the overwhelming popularity of our sold-out April rail excursions to Washington, Dc, we have added another trip on May 5-6. Once again, passengers will ride in comfort and style on our *Clinchfield* and *Powhatan Arrow* coaches on AMTRAK'S *Carolinian*. For more details, go to the Special Events page on our web site, <http://www.wataugavalleynrhs.org/specialevents.php>.

In the News – Region

AMTRAK's 40TH ANNIVERSARY TRAIN AT SPENCER, NC MARCH 17-18, 2012

The Amtrak 40th Anniversary Train will be on display at the North Carolina Transportation Museum on March 17–18, 2012 from 10 am to 4 pm. Note this will be the closest the train will get to the Tri-Cities Region. The train's equipment roster consists of the following cars.



Photo by Matt Donnelly

Display Car 10095, built in 1953 by the Budd Company, started life as Baggage car #3512 for the ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE (ATSF) Railroad. After transfer to AMTRAK in 1971, it was renumbered as #1029. In 1978 it was upgraded from steam heat to Head End Power (HEP) and renumbered #1219. In 2000, this car was one of three baggage cars rebuilt with bicycle racks for use on the *Twilight Shoreliner* and was renumbered #1856. In 2005, the car was stored at the Beech Grove, IN maintenance

facility due to mechanical problems. Selected for use on the 40th Anniversary Exhibit Train, it was the first of the three Display Cars completed at Beech Grove.

Display Car 10094, built in 1957 by the Budd Company as Baggage car #3547 for the ATSF, became part of the AMTRAK fleet in 1971 and was renumbered #1061. In 1978 it was upgraded from steam heat to Head End Power (HEP) and renumbered #1228. Needing heavy repair, the car was stored in 2009 at Beech Grove until selected as one of the three 40th Anniversary Exhibit Train Display Cars.



Photo by Mike Milburn



Photo by Matt Donnelly

Display Car 10093, built in 1953 by the Budd Company as Baggage car #3535 for the ATSF and transferred to AMTRAK fleet in 1971, when it was renumbered #1049. In 1978 it was upgraded from steam heat to Head End Power (HEP) and renumbered #1222. Needing repair and no longer fit for service, the car was stored in 2007 at Beech Grove until selected as one of the three 40th Anniversary Exhibit Train Display Cars.

Sleeper 10020, was built in 1950 by the Budd Company for the UNION PACIFIC as Sleeper #1404 and named, "Pacific Bend." It contained 10 roomettes and 6 double-bedrooms. It joined the AMTRAK fleet in 1971 as Sleeper #2603. The car was upgraded from steam heat to Head End Power (HEP) in 1977 and renumbered #2903. In 1997, the car was converted for service as a crew dormitory for use on eastern long distance trains, and renumbered #2504. Stored in 2006, the car remained inactive until 2007, when it was modified for use by the AMTRAK Police Department as a Special Communications Car. It was renumbered #10020 and renamed "Pacific Command" at that time. The original name, "Pacific Bend," [continued on next page]



Photo by Mike Milburn

has since been reapplied and the car will serve as a Sleeper for AMTRAK staff during the 40th Anniversary Exhibit Train's tour.



Photo by Steve Ostrowski

40th Anniversary Store 85999, built for AMTRAK by the Budd Company in 1976 as Amclub #20130, which featured a "split club" configuration of 18 club seats at one end and 23 coach seats on the other. In 2000, the car was converted to Capstone Cafe car #85004 for use on the newly branded Acela Regional service. It was stored on July 31, 2005 due to an abundance of food service cars of this type in the fleet. It was selected to serve as a combination 40th Anniversary Gift Shop and Display Car for the Exhibit Train, with work being performed at the Bear, DE and

Beech Grove, IN maintenance facilities.



P40 822, built for AMTRAK in 1993 by General Electric in Erie, Pa., is a 4,000 horse power locomotive that will provide the pulling power for the Exhibit Train. It was originally based in New Orleans and operated on various long distance routes. The #822 was later reassigned to Albany, N.Y. and operated in the northeast until stored as surplus in 2003. It was selected as one of the 15 P40 locomotives to be upgraded and returned to service as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Photo by Matt Donnelly.

NPCU 406, built for AMTRAK in July 1988 by EMD as a 3,000 horse power F40PH locomotive number #406, was rebuilt as **Non Powered Control Unit #406** in 2011 at the Beech Grove, IN maintenance facility. As a locomotive, the #406 operated all over the country on various routes before being stored in 2001. It was slated to become an NPCU to augment the push-pull fleet, and chosen to be part of the Exhibit Train because it can control a locomotive without the expense of additional fuel, allowing a train to operate in either direction without turning around. It will also provide Head End Power (HEP) for the lights and HVAC systems onboard the train. Photo by Matt Donnelly.

NORFOLK SOUTHERN Increases Capital Spending

[From RailwayAge.com] NORFOLK SOUTHERN has announced a \$2.4 billion capital improvement program for 2012, 12% higher than 2011. \$247 million has been budgeted for the continued implementation of Positive Train Control. For equipment, locomotive spending will total \$242 million or 10% of the total budget. This covers the purchase of 35 new units; continued investments in alternative power programs; rebuilding and upgrading existing locomotives; and full installation of emissions kits to meet government requirements. Freight car spending in 2012 will total \$346 million, 14% of the total capital budget.

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Fred Waskiewicz, Editor



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