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March 2010 No. 3

Meeting - Monday March 8th 7:00 PM

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## Local News

### RAILROAD EXPERIENCES

*Contributed by Owen Ireland*

What motivates over 600 people to give up a weekend to ride on a dysfunctional railroad coach behind a steam locomotive with a trailing diesel? What motivates hordes of people waiting at many grade crossings in Cincinnati and throughout the countryside peering down from bridges with camcorders staring for that right shot. Incredible, isn't it. Is it the steaming iron monster, the screeching whistle, the dirty soot covered smoke belching from a loud inferno of chugs? Does it represent a day gone past when things were more mechanistic? Does it call the wanderlust in each of us? What is it.

George Haas lived two houses north when we lived at 2622 Carrolton Avenue, Indianapolis. He married Liz and they eventually lived at 206 South Sherman Drive about 400 feet south of the Pennsylvania Railroad mainline to New York City. Parallel ran the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to Hamilton, Ohio and on to Cincinnati. I would see the high speed Penney passenger trains rush by and the slow moving B&O freight trains since the State Street Yards were not very far away. I was working in a machine shop across the tracks and did not like it. I contacted the Pennsylvania Railroad and they were not hiring in March, 1947. I then applied at the B&O on Virginia Avenue at 19 years of age and was hired as a brakeman in March 1947.

One of my first calls was to work the second shift at Connersville, Indiana, a small but thriving industrial town 60 plus miles east/southeast of Indianapolis. We stayed in the caboose. Dick Mayes also was hired at the same time and age and both of us went to Connersville. It was quite an experience to have 2 new brakeman switching cars in a swirling snow storm.

October, 1947 I switched to fireman and held seniority until 1954. The diesels appeared in 1950 and it was obvious that work would be irregular. Hence, I decided to go to college and entered the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida September, 1950. Aunt Margaret permitted me to live there. I doubted that the division would still be there by the time I was old enough to retire. It was... But the West End had its last run somewhere around 1990. I believe that all the guys I worked with had retired by 1990.

I was fireman on the lead locomotive heading west toward Indianapolis when we were ordered to meet the eastbound freight at Hurricane passing track just west of Connersville,

Indiana. They were to take the siding while we remain on the main track.

As we approached the block signal it started down and we assumed that the train was just entering the passing track. By the time we climbed the hill the train would be in the clear and we could proceed. As we neared the top of the hill we suddenly saw a red fuse being waved across the track. Mike Stanley big holed the train and at the last minute it stopped. Just ahead of us was the other train which had entered the side track but Sam Leonard had misjudged and came back on the main track. My engineer, Mike Stanley, told me to jump and I was on the bottom step when he train stopped. I was ready to jump and head for the woods! It was a near head on collision. One comment made from one engineer to another, "Does anyone have any toilet paper".

I shall always remember walking through the roundhouse on a bitterly snowy cold night in Indianapolis and boarding one of two locomotives coupled together getting ready to head east on either first or second 95. This was our hot shot train that hauled 4,000 tons to Hamilton, Ohio which was almost immediately transferred to the Toledo division for Chillicothe, Ohio and points east on the mainline to the East. It was cold but cozy on the locomotive. How can you describe the wooing sound of a steam engine thundering 50 to 60 miles and hour with the stars twinkling at you in the dark of night. Steam pressure was 190 to 200 pounds and the stoker rhythmically click-clacked over 20 tons of coal a night.

September, 1994..The Cincinnati Railroad Club sponsored a steam train trip from Cincinnati to Indianapolis on my old railroad. It ran on September 25, 1993 and was called the Indianapolis special. I remember being on the locomotive and feeling offended that as we went through Liberty, Indiana a "stranger" was driving the engine on my line!

And writing about Cincinnati reminds me that Riverfront Stadium was located in the middle of the railroad yards. I believe it was called the Spring Street Yards. On several occasions there was just enough coal in the tender to get us back to the roundhouse after a very long night, usually around 11 hours on duty.

Every night an eastbound and westbound freight would meet about halfway between Indianapolis and Hamilton, Ohio. On occasion they would not be a good meet meaning that one train was delayed due to trouble such as hot box, signal trouble. One night we were ordered to take the passing track at Lyons Ville which is about 10 miles east of Connersville. My job as fireman was to be ready at all times especially not to let the fire go out. On this night the eastbound train was quite late, I had fallen asleep as did the engineer. Next thing I knew the eastbound roared by and it

was time to move. I looked into the firebox and it was almost a black hole. The fire had almost gone out. Needless to say the engineer was not happy. Luckily we were the second locomotive and so by the time it was crucial to have steam I was able to stoke the fire and get it going again. We were near the water tower and by the time we took water and was ready to go steam pressure was pretty high.

I was on two wreck trains. The first was in Rushville, Indiana about 40 miles east of Indianapolis. A branch of the New York Central crossed the B & O which was controlled by an automatic signal. Harold Clarke, Puddle-But, very appropriate for he was quite fat, did not brake soon enough for the crossing and ran into the side of the N.Y.C. freight train. No one was hurt and damage was somewhat minimal but the locomotive was scrapped. I could see it in the scrap yard at Ivory Dale yards, just north of downtown Cincinnati. The other wreck was a westbound freight derailed just east of a small town called Brownsville, Indiana. It happened at the bottom of Brownsville Hill the one big pull we had going eastbound between Liberty and Brownsville, Indiana. Several coal cars were scattered all along the right of way. The damage was extensive. Don't know how long I was on the wreck train but at least a couple of days.

In September, 1994 I visited Hamilton, Ohio and saw only the foundation where once the roundhouse and bunk house existed. I always think when viewing such things, "How could it have happened". I also viewed the freight yards. It was such a busy place teeming with steam engines and banging freight cars.

I remember the house right next to the tracks where we stayed overnight. It was no more than 20 feet to the tracks where freight locomotives screeched through the night at the several street crossings. It was very alarming when I first started railroading in March, 1947 to hear such a racket in the bedroom while trying to sleep. This is the same house where I rented an efficiency during the summer of 1954 while working in the Hamilton yards. I was a student at the University of Miami at this time.

I was fireman one time when we hit an automobile and killed the driver. Ironically, Mr. Dutchman lived right next to the tracks and pulled in front of our westbound passenger train. It must have happened around 1949. I think that I still have the check that I was given as part of the coroner's inquest.

Many railroaders had nick names. Arthur--poker--Dean loved to play poker in the bunk house at Hamilton. He was a lousy locomotive engineer, was demoted while I worked there for part in train wreck at Rushville. He was engineer on second locomotive when it hit another train at Rushville. Then there was Harold--puddlebutt--Clarke who was on lead engine during that wreck. He was also demoted. His nick name was appropriate in that he was fat and really waddled when he walked. He would also sit at start of trip and never move off seat when stopped. Ed--Jitterbug--Benson was quite nervous and hyper, hence his name. Eaglebeak Nelson had a hawk like nose, hence nick name. I was at times called Irish.

It was around 4:00 A.M. sitting at State Street, Indianapolis, and I was on second engine of a double header. My engineer was eating a sandwich when all of a sudden the cab was full of dirt and dust. An eastbound Pennsylvania passenger train hit an automobile at the crossing thus creating all the dust as the car was pushed along the right of way. Don't recall if driver in the car was killed.

My first exposure to railroading was March, 1947 when I trained as a brakeman on a freight train between Indianapolis and West Dana, Illinois a wye that helper engines used to return to Indianapolis with another freight. I was on the caboose about a quarter mile east of the main line junction with the north/south Chicago and Eastern Illinois between Chicago and Terre Haute, Indiana. A south bound passenger train rattled over the junction heading south at high speed with light from the opening fire door streaking across the heavens. It was a very exciting moment.

Somewhere around 1992 I went to Moorefield and saw just an empty field. Very sad. The State Street yards were still there but rather badly neglected. I guess all the yard work was done at the Avon yards, west of Indianapolis.

*Owen Ireland is the Station Master at the Florida Rail Adventures Mount Dora Depot.*

## Chapter News

### Central Florida Railroad Museum Report February 2009

*Submitted by Ken Murdock. Museum Curator*

We had another outstanding museum workday on February 13, 2010 with 10 members participating. The weather was very cold with a heavy overcast, so outside work was only for the hardy. Speaking of the hardy, Al Sharp and Jim Shoemaker did work outside, finishing up the outside lighting in the breezeway so that we will have lights if we feed breakfast to the motorcar club again. All of their work was done to code and it is a real asset to have the added lighting for accessing the back building when needed during our regular meetings.

Lloyd Brown, being an early rising ex-Marine, was the first one there and was cleaning the glass on the showcases when Al and I arrived. Lloyd then worked with me on displays and bound a number of sets of the Outline History booklets. Al also did some vacuuming, mainly in the library, before going outside to work on the lights. Allen Quinn also bound some of the Outline History booklets, worked on displays and did some vacuuming. Allen is also working on our track level at home, making an adjustable foot for it to replace one that was missing when we acquired it.

Jerry Honetor was buried up to his eyebrows finishing the inventory of the late John Rapalje's collection, donated to us by his son, Bob Rapalje. Coincidentally, Bob Rapalje came out for a visit during our workday and brought us the remaining issues of Trains Magazine, Volumes 1 through 7. Bob wanted to keep his dad's first 7 volumes as a keepsake, so he bought an extra set of these volumes on eBay to donate to the chapter's library. This was a major expense for Bob but he did this as a memorial to his dad and wanted the magazine set to be complete. We will have a memorial plaque made and displayed in John's honor. Mike Ryan assisted Jerry with some of the library chores. Mike was ready to continue with his painting but the weather was too cold to paint.

If you are wondering why it has taken Jerry so long to complete the Rapalje inventory, well it is a large collection, but that's not the only reason. Each time Jerry picks up magazine or book to add to the inventory, he starts thumbing through it and then starts reading it!!! If you need to know anything about any book or magazine in the Rapalje collection, just ask Jerry! He has probably read it! That's okay Jerry, that's the fringe benefit you get for being the librarian.

Jeff Dearmin worked on the chapter's laptop, installing a demo copy of Past Perfect and beginning to get the system setup so that we can start our inventory. After the workday, Jeff met with the Heritage computer consultant to get our laptop setup to access the Heritage wireless network so that we can access their server to input our inventory. We share the Past Perfect license with Heritage;

however, our collection will be inventoried separately. We plan on having a planning and training session for Past Perfect during the March museum workday if Jeff has everything set up by then. If you would be interested in taking part in the inventory process, you should plan on attending the March workday.

Patrick Smith worked on the HO model railroad layout, cleaning track and servicing the locomotives. This was a much need task since these locomotives run 7 days a week and seldom get any attention until they die. I was able to spend most of my time working on the displays. I spent several days at home building a light box to illuminate the 1880s vintage stained glass clerestory window from a very ornate parlor car. It has been relocated directly over the library door since it is somewhat larger now and wouldn't fit back in its old location. This was a project that Clarence had suggested we do and he missed the formal lighting ceremony!

Vic Saul had museum duty, so he came out early and helped with some of the display projects. Vic was quite busy with visitors in the afternoon. Clarence Hurt was unable to attend and he was really missed. We didn't have him to ring the lunch bell; consequently, we were late going to lunch. Clarence, we depend on you!! Clarence actually had a very good reason for missing. His wife, Sherry, became very ill and during the night and he stayed home to care for her. Clarence, we missed you and hope that Sherry is much better by now. We all went to Harry and Larry's BBQ for lunch and we had the pleasure of having Bob Rapalje join us. I'm trying to make a member out of him. A Big Thank You to each of you for making this another very productive workday and for helping to improve our museum.

### **CENTRAL FLORIDA CHAPTER, NRHS Combined Board and Regular Meeting Minutes January 11, 2010**

*Submitted by Mike Ryan. Secretary*

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. By President Bill Dusenbury.

Chapter Chaplain David Rhea led the members in prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

The following Board Members were present: Bill Dusenbury, Phil Cross, Dan Crusie, Jerry Honetor, Clarence Hurt, David Rhea, Irv Lipscomb, Ken Murdock, and Mike Ryan.

Bill Dusenbury asked if there were any visitors and guests. Bob McCracken, Rick Easterly, Robert and Sharon Brown were present. Robert is President of the Ann Arbor Chapter of the NRHS. Also in attendance was potential member Frank Milmore

Regarding Recognition of Members/Friends Concerns, it was announced that Jack Whitt, a chapter member since 1989 died. He was 83 years old and was a dentist from Yalaha.

#### DECEMBER MEETING MINUTES:

President Dusenbury asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December meeting. The motion was made by David Rhea and seconded by Irv Lipscomb. The motion passed unanimously.

#### TREASURER REPORT:

Treasurer David Rhea gave a report for the month of January 2010. David announced that during the month the chapter received an income of \$766.02 and had expenditures of \$ 1,010. The balance in the account is \$7,831.51.

David reminded members that dues must be sent in by the end of this month. The cutoff is March 1.

#### MEMBERSHIP AND PROGRAMS REPORT:

Vice President Dan Crusie announced that the chapter has 67 members, including those who have yet to renew. Reminders have been sent to those who still have to pay dues.

Dan reminded members of an event sponsored by The Florida Railroad Museum in Parrish, Florida on February 20th. The #75 Flagg Coal Engine will be there. Car-pooling from the Winter Garden Museum will leave at 9:30 a.m. that Saturday morning with an intent to ride the 2:00 p.m. train. Talk to Dan to set up reservations.

Florida Rail Adventures will be offering an Orlando Rail Ramble on Monday, February 14<sup>th</sup>. Call FRA at 353-589-4300 to set up reservations. Train leaves Eustis at 9:30 a.m.

The City of Tavares will be conducting their annual: Trains, Planes, and B-B-Que on April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. Event will be in Wooton Park by the shoreline of Lake Dora in downtown Tavares.

The Bloom and Grow Spring Fever event will take place in Winter Garden April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>.

Phil Cross informed the Chapter that there will be a live steam event in Candler, Florida this coming weekend, February 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.

Phil also mentioned that the Ridge Live Steamers would run their annual winter event in Dundee, FL Thursday February 25<sup>th</sup> through Sunday February 28<sup>th</sup>.

Phil Cross reminded the Chapter that Wes Coscia has an open invitation to come to his facility. Wes has over 700 feet of track in Dade City including motorcars and a caboose. A trip there might be possible either March or April.

Motorcars will be at the Winter Garden Depot the last weekend in March. On 3/27, we might sponsor coffee and donuts instead of a full breakfast like we did last year. Irv will look into this type of breakfast. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, the motorcars will leave our depot for an excursion to Tavares. Riding in the motorcars is a hit and miss situation.

Ken mentioned the possibility of a trip to Fort Pierce to see the progress on the restoration of the ex-FEC 0-8-0 steam locomotive # 253.

#### EDUCATION REPORT:

Irv Lipscomb reported hosting the museum in February is complete. However, there are several weekends in March that will need volunteers.

Volunteers came forward to provide refreshments for upcoming meetings.

Jerry Honetor informed the Chapter that he has unsuccessfully tried to contact owners of the toy train ride for inclusion in the Winter Garden Spring Fever event. That decision must be made now.

#### MUSEUM CURATOR REPORT:

Ken Murdock reported that the next workday would be this coming Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup>. Several members did a show of hands to volunteer.

Ken told the group that the Museum had 407 visitors in the month of January.

Ken also mentioned that he will be attending the archival workshop on 2/26.

The specifics regarding the Canadian Trip has been submitted to Trains and NRHS with hopeful appearance in April, May, and June issues. Advertising in the Orlando Sentinel would be very costly. However, a nice article about the trip appeared in that newspaper that dealt with what to wear on a long train trip. So far only one person has paid for this excursion.

#### SECRETARY REPORT:

Mike Ryan apologized for "some timer's disease" when he forgot that the Flatwheel newsletter now appears on our web site and that the minutes from the last meeting are part of that publication. Mike had sent the minutes of the last meeting in an email to everyone.

#### ASSISTANT SECRETARY REPORT:

No report

#### NATIONAL DIRECTOR REPORT:

None. Chuck Ansell was not present at the meeting.

#### HISTORIAN REPORT:

Phil Cross told the group that he will send out a request for photo and paper items to be donated. Memorabilia

needed include history of events, displays, restoration of the Winter Garden Depot and banquet pictures.

Clayton Bishop brought and donated a few hundred slides. Clayton showed a number of post cards including dates sent and dates received several days later for items between Leesburg and Tavares.

#### PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President Bill Dusenbury asked about a location for the annual banquet. Clarence Hurt made a motion to have the banquet on board the dinner train out of Eustis. That motion was seconded by Jerry Honetor. After several minutes of discussion during which a \$300 deposit was mentioned, there was a motion to table the motion. The motion passed with Mike Ryan dissenting.

Mike will talk to Neil Bagaus about the train as a banquet site without a deposit. Phil Cross is checking with the West Orange Country Club – they require the \$300 deposit.

Bill mentioned that there will be a train show in Deland on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and asked if there was any interest in setting up a display for our Chapter. No one indicated any interest.

#### TECHNOLOGY/WEBSITE/FLATWHEEL EDITOR REPORT:

Bill Dusenbury and Phil Cross recommended that Jeff Dearmin send out an email to members as a reminder that the Flatwheel is now available on line at the Chapter web site.

Phil Cross brought up that he has a listing of Chapter "Friends" and read the names of several people on that list to see if anyone knew who they were.

Ken and Phil are working with the Heritage Foundation to see if they will include details about the Canadian rail trip on their web site.

#### LIBRARY COMMITTEE REPORT:

Jerry Honetor mentioned that the \$50 software that he was using to document donated books, magazines, slides, and videos was not versatile enough to meet our demands. He downloaded a trial version of 'Prima Soft' software and said that it was a program that he could easily use. The cost for the software is about \$250. Jerry asked if the Chapter could purchase this software. David Rhea made the motion to purchase with Mike Ryan seconding the motion. The motion included limiting the purchase to a maximum of \$300 and was passed unanimously.

Jerry also informed the members that he had received vintage 1930's and 1940's issues of Railroad Magazine donated by Bill Cogswell. He also displayed scarves showing RR emblems. It was suggested that the scarves be made available for purchase in the museum. Irv Lipscomb has videos that he will donate to the gift shop.

#### WINTER GARDEN HERITAGE FOUNDATION MUSEUMS COMMITTEE REPORT:

Phil Cross told the Chapter that there were 209 hours donated. He said that volunteers need to include mileage in their hours if residence is outside of Winter Garden.

The History Center is actively looking for a new building. In the past when a site has opened up, the door has been closed too soon.

The Heritage Foundation and the City of Winter Garden are pursuing the installation of a fire sprinkler system in the Depot since the debt payment on the Plant Street theater has been completed. It is estimated that this installation will cost around \$85,000.

Phil recommended that Chapter members read the Telegraph. NRHS is dealing with very serious issues. At stake is the survival of NRHS.

The Chapter can receive several volumes of research books (sources of books and articles) from Thomas T. Tabor. Phil said that he would e-mail him and request the four publications.

Phil also reported that he and Bill Dusenbury will be setting up a meeting with Pete Petree – VP and General Manager for Florida Central Railroad to discuss track upgrade to the Depot. It was emphasized that as important as this is, the priority right now is for the installation of a sprinkler system.

#### FLORIDA CENTRAL RAILROAD UPDATE:

Bill Dusenbury had nothing to report

#### FLORIDA RAIL ADVENTURES UPDATE:

Florida Rail Adventures President Neil Bagaus was not present. Mike Ryan reported that ridership on the Eustis to Tavares line is up. Many people are willing to spend \$18 just to ride in the dome.

Mike also told the Chapter that new estimates for track repair from Mount Dora to Eustis have been received. The new amounts are \$450,000 and \$479,000.

Mike reported that the GP10 Diesel engine is not in service. Water was discovered with the oil and there has to be a determination of where the leak is and what repair costs might be. In the interim, the NW2 switcher is handling all excursions.

#### PRESENTATION:

President Bill Dusenbury presented Librarian Jerry Honetor with an "ATTA BOY" plaque.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn. The Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm

Ken Murdock provided refreshments.

Following the meeting Al Pfeiffer shared pictures he took during a motor trip to Texas and Arkansas. Photographs included pictures of locomotives and cabooses.



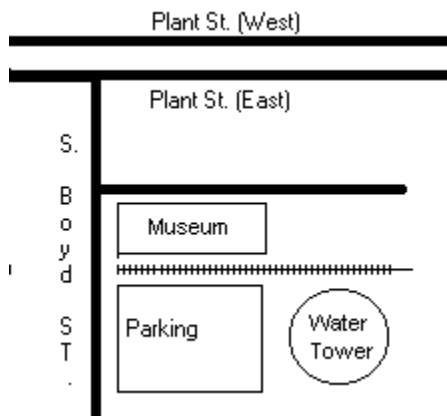
# THE FLATWHEEL

PO Box 770567  
Winter Garden, FL 34777

March 2010

**The Museum:** is located in downtown Winter Garden at 101 South Boyd Street, Winter Garden, FL 34787

It is open to visitors on **Daily 1-5 PM**, excluding holidays, or by special arrangements.



**The Central Florida Chapter** of the NRHS meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month at 7:00 PM at the museum location. Guests and visitors are encouraged to attend.

Club correspondence and other materials for the club should be sent to:

CFC-NRHS  
PO Box 770567  
Winter Garden, FL 34777-0567

**Web page:** <http://www.cfcnrhs.org>

**Flatwheel:** Material for the Flatwheel (including exchange newsletters) should be sent to:

The Flatwheel  
101 South Boyd Street  
Winter Garden, FL 34787

Email: [cfcnrhs@gmail.com](mailto:cfcnrhs@gmail.com)