



BLUE RIDGE DISPATCHER

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No. 3



Jean Raas presents the program for the March meeting of the Blue Ridge Chapter. He'll show slides of a trip he took out west c. 1970. While most of the images were taken in Colorado, he'll have a few on Sherman Hill and Cheyenne in Wyoming. Ought to be a nice look back. Plan to attend!

Wednesday, March 11, 2015. 6:00 p.m.
Charley's Restaurant. 707 Graves Mill Rd. Lynchburg, VA



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Lynchburg, Virginia



Minutes From The February 11, 2015 Meeting of The Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS

Our regularly scheduled meeting for February 2015 was held at Charley's Restaurant and was called to order by President Johnson at 7:43 pm (1943hrs. Official CSX time). Thirteen minutes behind schedule, Rick welcomed twenty-four members in good standing and four visitors. Those visiting us for the evening included Edie Tanner, Dona Duval, A. Howell Franklin and Dorr Tucker. Members joining us who have been absent from recent meetings included David Harris and Steve Blanchard. It was also noted that our usual wait staff person Dave was absent and his vacancy was filled by two young ladies off of Charley's extra board.

Announcements: Rick announced that long time member Carl Stern passed away on January 17, 2015. His membership in the NRHS dates back to 1948. Mr. Stern was a tremendous fan throughout his life and enjoyed traveling by train.

Old Business: Rick recounted the January fun meeting which was held on January 28th with fifteen people in attendance and six presenters.

New Business: Rick invited dates for scheduling a BRC director's meeting and Wednesday, February 25th was ultimately arrived at with meeting location to be determined. Dale Diacont invited everyone to *Red Dog Manor* in Waynesboro for an NRHS picnic scheduled for Sunday, September 27th. Event will also welcome members of the Rivanna and Old Dominion Chapters.

Treasurer's Report: Given by John Tanner.

Vice President's Report: Gale McKinley stated that most of the membership has indeed renewed with the national, however, two BRC checks, that were sent to national to cover two previous national dues submittals, had not been cashed. She and John Tanner were investigating as to why. Rick added that there were still members that have not paid their 2015 dues and need to do so soon.

National Representative's Report: Bob Leslie had no report

Rail Heritage Region Report: Norris Deyerle asked for volunteers to represent the BRC at the Virginia Museum Of Transportation's Train Lover's Day, this Saturday, February 14th in Roanoke. BRC volunteers could hand out BRC literature, operate model trains, display photographs, present programs, etc. Jim Overholser and Gale McKinley volunteered. Gary Quale also volunteered the use of a small layout if someone would like to take it to Roanoke and set it up as he could not attend the event.

Editor's Report: Garland Harper was not present, however, Rick thanked him for getting the newsletter out.

Webmaster Report: John Siegle reports 30 to 60 hits on our information with regards to programs. Links are in place for other rail related groups with which we interact. Other groups include VMT, C&OHS, N&WHS and High Bridge Trail State Park. Calendar of events is very much in demand with over 7,600 inquiries. John congratulated Norris on the popularity of his monthly "Calendar of Events".

Upcoming Events: Jean Raas will be presenting a slide program at the March 11 meeting. Rivanna Chapter member, Bernard Haxel, will be our guest speaker at the March 25 "Fun Meeting" presenting a program on Amtrak's AEM7 locomotive replacement program with new Siemens locomotives.

Tonight's program was Dale Diacont's "2014 Year in Review." No 50/50 drawing; fish bowl but no tickets. Business meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Dale W. Diacont, Secretary

Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS 2015 Calendar of Events
57th Anniversary of the Blue Ridge Chapter, A Virginia's Rail Heritage Region Partner
Compiled By Norris Deyerle, Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS Chairman of Virginia's Rail Heritage Region Partners
Newly updated or added events since last month printed in "Bold Italics".

Notice: I urge our friends with the other railway historical groups and museums to take advantage of www.trainfinder.com or www.trains.com. There is no cost to promote your train show on these websites. It's simple to add your event to their websites and your event approval is fast and efficient. These are websites that will help us all get the word out about our events!

Are you interested in learning more about the historic Norfolk & Western Railway "High Bridge" in Farmville, Va.? Please check out the following links for more info:

Friends of High Bridge Trail: <https://sites.google.com/site/friendsofhighbridgetrail/>

High Bridge Trail State Park: http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/hig.shtml

<http://www.virginia.org/Listings/OutdoorsAndSports/HighBridgeTrailStatePark/>

Historical USGS Topographical Maps: A great research tool for locating abandoned railroad lines, etc.

<http://nationalmap.gov/historical/>

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation – Free Official State of Virginia Railroad Map, 600 East Main Street, Richmond, Va. 23219 Phone: 804-786-4440 www.drpt.virginia.gov

Tennessee Valley Railroad/Norfolk Southern 21st Century Steam Train Excursion Schedule Info:

<http://www.tvrail.com/pages/21st-century-steam> Note: Find more railroad related info on other websites at the end of this Calendar Of Events.

MARCH 2015

3-11-15: {Wednesday} BRC Monthly Meeting, Jean Raas' slide presentation will cover Colorado Standard Gauge Railroad, Circa 1970. {ATSF, C&S, CB&Q, DRGW and UP} The weather is predicted to be much nicer on the day of this meeting. I'm sure we all will enjoy Jean's show! Please plan to attend and feel free to bring a guest.

3-14-15: {Saturday} WB&A Chapter TCA Toy Train Show, Annapolis Armory, 18 Willow Street, Annapolis, Md. 21401, Show Times: 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, Admission: \$5.00, Children Under 12, Military, Scouts in Uniform, and WB&A Members Admitted Free. Info: <http://wbachapter.org>

3-17-15: {Tuesday} Rivanna Chapter, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Hibachi Grill, Charlottesville, Va. This is Blue Ridge Chapter member Dale Diacont's next show date on his 2105 U.S.A. Tour! Dale presented our February 2015 show and the Baltimore Chapter's March 9, 2015 show! I'm sure glad that Dale is a man and not a lady! There may be folks talking about how much the old boy gets around! Ha! Check with Dale at our next meeting to see if he has any of his 2015 U.S.A. Tour t-shirts still available. I think that Lee Hawkins has one that reads "EVENT STAFF" across the back! Ha! Dine at 6:00 pm, Program at 7:00 pm. Visitors are welcome! Info: Ed deBary, eddebaryjr@aol.com or <http://nrhsrivanna.blogspot.com>

3-19-15: {Thursday} Roanoke Chapter, NRHS Monthly Meeting, 7:30 pm, O. Winston Link Museum Auditorium, Roanoke, Va. Info: www.RoanokeNRHS.org

3-25-15: {Wednesday} BRC "Fun Meeting", Special guest Bernard Haxel of the Rivanna Chapter, NRHS will present a program about the replacement, going on right now, of Amtrak's venerable AEM7 electric locomotives on the Northeast Corridor with a new model from Siemens. Bernard's presentation will take around thirty minutes. IMPORTANT NOTICE! "Fun Meeting" attendees are asked to also bring their own digital images to share with others. Sounds like a "Fun Meeting" that everyone will enjoy! See you there! Feel free to bring guests!

3-28-15: {Saturday} Mine Branch Tour on the old Franklin & Pittsylvania Railroad, weather date Saturday April, 4, 2015. The trip starts two miles east of Pittsville on Rt. 672 at 11:00 am. The total time should be about one and one half hours which includes a leisurely paced half mile of walking on a gentle grade.

Info: Phone Tex Carter at 434-332-3878 or email tex@fandprailroad.org.

Website: www.fandprailroad.org, Courtesy of Jim Overholser

APRIL 2015

4-08-15: {Wednesday} BRC Monthly Meeting, Charles S. "Dutch" Tubman, Train Trip Across Canada Presentation, digital

4-16-15: {Thursday} Roanoke Chapter, NRHS Monthly Meeting, 7:30 pm, O. Winston Link Museum Auditorium, Roanoke, Va. Info: www.RoanokeNRHS.org

MAY 2015

5-13-15: {Wednesday} BRC Monthly Meeting, Kurt Reisweber Presentation

5-15-17-15: {Friday-Sunday} Cass Railfan Weekend, Cass, WV. Includes rare mileage steam trips between Spruce and Cheat Bridge, Info: <http://www.cassrailroad.com> and <http://mtn-rail.com> Courtesy of Jim Overholser

5-27-15: {Wednesday} BRC "Fun Meeting"

JUNE 2015

6-6-15: {Saturday} C&O Railway Heritage Festival & Train Show, IMPORTANT MESSAGE! TWO SEPARATE EVENTS! Festival location is the C&O Railway Heritage Center. The Train Show vendors will set up inside "The Mill". Clifton Forge School of the Arts, 518 Church St., Clifton Forge, Va. Train Show Vendor 6 ft. rectangular tables rent for \$20.00 each. Train Show times: 10:00 am - 5:00 pm. Info: <http://www.candoheritage.org> or phone 540-862-2210

6-10-15: {Wednesday} BRC Monthly Meeting, Derek Wimberly Presentation

6-14-21-15: {Sunday - Sunday} NRHS 2015 National Convention, On Sunday June 21, 2015 there's a public rail excursion scheduled. Reservations required. Location: Rutland, Vermont, Info: http://www.nrhs.com/2015_Convention

6-18-21-15: {Thursday - Sunday} N&WHS 2015 Convention, Marion, Ohio, Info: <http://www.nwhs.org/convention/2015marion>

JULY 2015

7-08-15: {Wednesday} BRC Monthly Meeting, Wayland Moore Presentation, Dick Myers' slides

7-22-15: {Wednesday} BRC "Fun Meeting", Michael E. Jones Presentation, Author of "Lost At Thaxton", Michael will present a program/talk about the 1889 wreck of N&W passenger train #2 at Thaxton, Va. and discuss his book which he will have on hand for purchase and signing. For more info, see <http://lostatthaxton.com>

7-29-8-2-15: {Wednesday-Sunday} C&O Historical Society Annual Conference, Staunton, Va. Info: <http://www.cohs.org> Courtesy of Jim Overholser

AUGUST 2015

8-08-15 {Saturday} Lynchburg Rail Day 2015!

8-12-15 {Wednesday} BRC Monthly Meeting, Dale Diacont Presentation

SEPTEMBER 2015

9-09-15: {Wednesday} BRC Monthly Meeting, Norris Deyerle Presentation, slides

9-23-15 {Wednesday} BRC "Fun Meeting"

OCTOBER 2015

10-14-15: {Wednesday} BRC Monthly Meeting, Kurt Reisweber Presentation

NOVEMBER 2015

11-11-15: {Wednesday} BRC Monthly Meeting, Wayland Moore Presentation

11-25-15: NO NOVEMBER "FUN MEETING" DUE TO THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY!

DECEMBER 2015

12-05-15: {Saturday} Annual BRC Christmas Banquet, Altavista, Va. Former Southern Railway Station, Prior reservations required.

12-09-15: {Wednesday} BRC Monthly Meeting, Open Program Slot

12-19-15: {Saturday} Annual BRC Kemper Street Station "Holiday Gathering"

"Lynchburg Rail Day 2015", Saturday, August 8, 2015

Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS Website: www.blueridgenrhs.org

Model Railroading:

High Bridge Railroad Club, Farmville, Va. Info: www.sites.google.com/site/hbrrclub

Modern Day Railroading:

Norfolk Southern and CSX Locomotives – The Diesel Shop, NS and CSX Loco rosters with professional quality photographs. The NS site includes NS Heritage locomotives. <http://www.thedieselshop.us/NS.HTML> &

<http://www.thedieselshop.us/CSX.HTML>

"Fallen Flag" railroad of local interest:

Franklin & Pittsylvania Railroad, "The old fast and perfect" railroad that ran between Gretna and Rocky Mount, Va.:

www.fandprailroad.org

Locomotive Search Tool And Railroad Photos Link: www.railbaron.rpicturearchives.net

Railroad Related Events Information: Visit: www.varailheritage.org, www.vmt.org, www.linkmuseum.org,

www.nctrans.org, www.RoanokeNRHS.org, <http://nrhsrivanna.blogspot.com>, www.dcnrhs.org, www.odcnrhs.org

www.nwhs.org, www.cohs.org, www.csxthsociety.org, www.thecrhs.org, www.theruralretreatdepot.com,

www.srha.org, www.rfandp.org, www.vatraincollectors.com, www.traincollectors.org, www.railroadcollectors.org,

www.nhvry.org, www.norfolksouthernhs.org, www.RailServe.com, www.gsmr.com, www.trains.com,

www.TrainFinder.com, www.gserr.com, www.wghshow.com, www.drpt.virginia.gov, www.crewerailroadmuseum.org

Norfolk Southern/TVRM Steam Excursion Website: <http://www.21stcenturysteam.com> OR

<http://www.tvrail.com/pages/21st-century-steam>

Steam Train Events in the United States and Canada: www.diary.svsfilm.com

Steam Locomotive Locations: www.steamlocomotive.com

Railroad Historical Information and Related Photos: www.hawkinsrails.net

Railroad Photos: www.railsinvirginia.com, www.railfirephotography.com

Key Lock & Lantern Railroad History and Preservation Organization, www.klnl.org

Danville & Western Ry. Website: Railway operated in Southwestern Virginia between Danville and Stuart.

<http://southern-railway.railfan.net/dw/>

Trains & Travel International: www.traintrips.biz

Additional links to other NRHS Chapters, Railroad Historical Societies and Museums available at

www.blueridgenrhs.org

Virginia Museum Of Transportation Rail Cam: <http://www.nwhs.org/cam/vmt>

Roanoke, Va. Rail Cam: <http://128.173.197.94:443/RRCmov>

The Rural Retreat Depot Foundation has commissioned a documentary entitled "The Rural Retreat Depot—Its History, its Impact, its Future". Running about 30 minutes, this documentary will be released in April. The final version will feature old photos and interviews that discuss the Civil War, Morse Code, the O Winston Link photos and more. The home page of our website has a link to a two-and-a-half minute trailer.

Frank Akers, The Rural Retreat Depot Foundation www.theruralretreatdepot.com

(Info courtesy of N&W Historical Society)

SIGHTINGS



Feb. 11 - The NS "GoRail" unit with a Canadian Pacific partner spotted behind Kemper St Station on train 35Q. (G. Harper)



Feb. 12 - NS 6103 with NS research train seen tied up in the Amtrak yard north of Kemper St Station. (Rick Dash-II Johnson)



Feb. 20 - Norris Deyerle poses with BNSF executive-schemed unit 9776 on a late, and stopped NS train 211. (G. Harper)

Feb. 21 - With snow flying Amtrak Phase I heritage unit on the platform at Kemper St. Station boards passengers on train 156. (G. Harper)



March 7 - Not necessarily a train sighting, but more like a people sighting. 300 riders + or - gather behind Kemper Street Station to board the northbound Regional, Train 156. Most of the riders were area college students beginning their Spring Break (yes, with snow on the ground!) .

(G. Harper)

Here's the answer to last month's trivia question posed by member Lee Hawkins.

Lee asked: Name this famous Lynchburg native?

- He was the major speaker at a Norfolk and Western Better Service Convention in the early fifties at the Hotel Roanoke.
- Was on the Board of Directors for Southern Railway for a long time.
- And was born next door to the Texas Inn on Main Street.

Answer: Douglas Southall Freeman. To see an image of his historical marker, go to <http://www.markerhistory.com/douglas-southall-freeman-marker-q-6-17/>



611's Hydrostatic Test Complete! Superheaters installed and side rods tested, cleaned and polished

The Virginia Museum of Transportation, Inc., announces that the 611 mechanical crew, led by Scott Lindsay, our chief mechanical officer and president of Steam Operations Corporation, has completed the hydrostatic test of the boiler required by federal regulations.



"The restoration is progressing quickly," said Beverly T. Fitzpatrick, Jr., VMT's executive director. "We expect the Norfolk & Western Class J 611™ to return to her home in Roanoke in mid-2015."

Fitzpatrick said that the 611's Homecoming and excursion schedule is being developed with the help of Norfolk Southern. "We appreciate Norfolk Southern's interest in 611's restoration and all the help they are providing to make her Homecoming a celebration that will be remembered for a long time."

Scott Lindsay, chief mechanical officer and president of Steam Operations Corporation, gives the thumbs-up after the hydrostatic test was completed.

The Virginia Museum of Transportation hopes to announce her Homecoming and early excursion schedule in a few weeks. "But with any restoration as thorough and complex as 611's, it's important to remember that the unexpected is expected," Fitzpatrick said. "The mechanical team in Spencer, North Carolina, is working seven days per week to make this happen safely. We are so proud of their hard work and dedication to this restoration."

Fitzpatrick also credits the team at the North Carolina Transportation Museum (NCTM) in Spencer, North Carolina, for the success of the restoration to date. "The team at the NCTM has welcomed the 611 and has been so helpful to us throughout the restoration. We are so thankful for all they have done for us!"

In other restoration news:

- The superheaters were installed!
- Side rods are being cleaned, tested, repaired and polished to a shine!
- Volunteers have donated almost 7,000 hours of work with no safety incidents!
- Thank you to the incredible team of dedicated volunteers and the mechanical team for helping our dream come true!



Champion of railroad history preservation in Roanoke dies. By Mike Allen, The Roanoke Times

Norfolk Southern executive David Helmer shared a passion for trains with his good friend O. Winston Link. The famed photographer often told Helmer he wanted a museum to house his photographs that glorified the age of steam engines.

Helmer, too, wanted that museum, and believed it belonged in Roanoke. He got civic leaders in Roanoke to board the train and led the efforts to persuade Link that it needed to be here.

"I don't think there'd be a Link museum without David Helmer," said Bev Fitzpatrick, executive director of the Virginia Museum of Transportation.

Helmer, 72, died February 21 in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he had traveled to root for the wrestling team of his beloved alma mater, Oklahoma State University. His son, Chris, said his father had a heart attack while parking at the hotel. With his passing, nonprofits in Roanoke lost a well-connected and organized fundraiser and idea man.

"David never rested, didn't do anything halfway," said George Kegley, director of publications for the Historical Society of Western Virginia, which operates the O. Winston Link Museum. Helmer, a past president of the society, was still serving as a board member.

"He was tireless and passionate in his work for the railroad history," Kegley said.

Though it's no secret Helmer was a driving force behind the founding of the Link museum, he would have been the first to say he didn't do it alone, his son said. In all his endeavors with the transportation museum, the historical society, the Kiwanis Club of Roanoke and more, he preferred to work behind the scenes and let others have the credit.

An Oklahoma native, the child of German-Russian immigrants, Helmer went through Oklahoma State's ROTC program and enlisted in the Army after graduating. He was deployed to Vietnam in 1965 as part of a transportation unit. He returned to Vietnam almost 40 years later and revisited the places where his unit traveled. In a 2009 presentation to the Kiwanis Club, he described encountering North Vietnamese soldiers. "I did the job the government asked me and so did they. How can you be angry?"

He retired from the service as a lieutenant colonel. He set out from Fort Eustis in Newport News for job interviews that awaited in Texas and Oklahoma, but his car broke down in Roanoke. On a whim, he applied at the Norfolk & Western headquarters.

"The rest is history," Chris Helmer said.

David Helmer worked his way up from clerical duties to director of the Norfolk Southern costs section, from which he retired about 15 years ago, his son said.

A rail buff since childhood, he applied his enthusiasm with martial precision to planning events for the Roanoke Transportation Museum in the 1970s and early 1980s. Among his triumphs was the establishment of an annual NASCAR Racing Weekend where museum visitors could meet top drivers.

He was so successful that he was asked to organize Roanoke's 1982 Centennial Parade, for which he recruited celebrities such as All-Star baseball player John Wesley "Boog" Powell and pro football player "Mean Joe" Greene. A Joe Kennedy column in the Roanoke Times affectionately nicknamed him "General Helmer."

Bill and Ellen Arnold, volunteers with the Link museum since before its 2004 opening, first met Helmer and his wife Grace through the Roanoke Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. The Helmers introduced the Arnolds to Link, who in the early '80s was already a family friend.

As Link searched for a place for his museum, "David became very active toward fostering that," Bill Arnold said.

In 1999, Helmer initiated the conversation that led to the founding of the Link museum — literally rounding up Center in the Square president Jim Sears and then-Historical Society director Kent Chrisman during a gathering at Roanoke Mayor Ralph Smith's house and making the pitch.

As the wheels got rolling, Helmer turned to fundraising for the project, and more. Bill Arnold described learning that one of the antique gas pumps featured in one of Link's photos still existed. When he mentioned this to Helmer, his friend demanded, "Where? Where?"

"I told him where it was, and said, 'Now, go get it,'" Arnold said. Helmer did, and made arrangements to have it permanently installed in the museum.

The Link museum "was the love of his life," Bill Arnold said, "besides his family, of course."

Helmer is survived by his wife, Grace, his children, Delta and Chris, and three grandchildren.



David Helmer seen above helping passengers off the Meridium charter train just arrived at Kemper St. from Roanoke. May 6, 2011.

Ed. Note: David was an enthusiastic train rider, too, and your Editor booked many, many trips over the years for the two of them, very often for the purpose of attending Oklahoma State athletic events. A memorial service was held at the Link Museum on March 7. Among the Blue Ridge Chapter member attending were Norris and Peggy Deyerle, Lee and Jan Hawkins, Jim Overholser and Derek Wimberly. Hundreds were there they reported.

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Lynchburg Rail Day 2015. Saturday, August 8, 2015.