

2003-2

# The Scrambler

Volume 16, Number 9

May 2003

## Monthly Newsletter of the Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter, National Railway Historical Society

Opinions expressed in the *Scrambler* are those of the Editor and contributors. They do not represent the official view of the Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter, its members, officers or directors or the National Railway Historical Society, Inc. unless otherwise stated.

### n.e.c (not elsewhere classified)

The long arm of the Iraq conflict has affected a Northwest Arkansas father and railfan. Al Blair, who lives in Gravette, lost his 24-year old Marine to the Iraq war. Al is a railfan that I met last September when doing a Railroads of Benton County program at the Gravette Civic Center. Al told me that he has a model layout that he works on during lunch breaks at one of the lumber companies in Pryor, OK.

The Winter 2003 newsletter of the Fort Smith Trolley Museum reported that Steam Operation Corporation of Birmingham, Alabama had done an extensive examination of the engine. The experts concluded the engine was in very good condition. As with the Frisco 4500 the Frisco was very careful to carefully prepare any locomotives destined for donation. The cost of restoring the locomotive to operation was estimated to be between \$680,000 and \$750,000. Several short-term preservation suggestions were made including a thorough cleaning of the firebox, ash pan and smokebox, capping the smokestack and removing sand from the sand dome. The Fort Smith Trolley Museum stated it had no plans other than to preserve and display the engine. The need of a suitable structure to protect the engine from its current outdoor location was noted.

The Siloam Springs Museum, located at 112 Maxwell Street in downtown Siloam Springs, has put together a display on the Kansas City Southern Railway and predecessor entities. It will run through at least June 8, 2003 as it

will be part of the Kansas City Southern Historical Society meeting that runs the same weekend as our Chapter-sponsored Quad Chapters plus 2 Railroad History Convention. The Siloam Springs Museum exhibit apparently has a lot of material on the RPO operation that provided employment for about 35 postal clerks in Siloam Springs. The town was an RPO crew change base for postal clerks on the KC-Texarkana RPO run. The Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

Former A & M No. 70, the ex-CN 4500 six axle engine, was sold recently by its private owner. Chapter member Jim Plumlee mentioned that *Railpace*, an Eastern railfan magazine, said the engine was now on the Western New York & Pennsylvania. Casey Shepherd, A & M CMO-Locomotives, later told me that the engine had only operated once between Emma Avenue and Huntsville Avenue in downtown Springdale. He said there was no credence to railfan reports stating the engine had gotten stuck due to clearance problems on the southern end of the line.

Jim had also reported an in motion sighting of C-624 former Chicago Belt Railway engine No. 601. I later saw the engine operating near the Springdale depot. It is now marked as "01" and I noted it had two large stainless steel boxes on the front end. I erroneously thought they were some kind of special lighting device. However Casey Shepherd indicated the "lights" were actually remote con-

trol devices that would enable someone on the ground to operate the engine. The remote control permits MU operation as well. The control unit lists for \$65,000, a high price compared to the cost of the locomotives themselves. Engine 01 is slated to become No. 70 on the A & M engine roster. It is planned to use the unit on the north end of the A & M between Springdale and the Monett, Mo. interchange point with the BNSF.

Railfans have followed with interest over the years the proposals involving the Dickson Street depot of the Frisco. Chapter founding member Bob Oswald recently lent me his copy of the 1988 Pentrex video "Alcos through the Ozarks". The video mentioned that the depot, placed on the National Register of Historic Places on December 5, 1988, was to become a restaurant.

Since that time a number of proposals have surfaced but nothing has happened. The depot has been host to a number of short-term events such as art shows and most recently Prayer for Peace. Local papers have carried a series of articles involving potential redevelopment of the area but have been silent on the fate of the depot. Most recently a group has been promoting the establishment of a Smithsonian Institution Affiliates Museum and theater on the site of the Bank of Fayetteville's Train Bank. Parking for the proposed regional draw would require a parking facility to be constructed on top of the existing Walton Arts Center main parking lot.

I called John Lewis, President of the Bank of Fayetteville, and asked what plans, if any, were underway for the depot. He said that the only certain thing was that the depot would not be used as a restaurant. He said that one plan envisaged an A & M ticket facility and a coffee house. He also mentioned the depot might become a bank if the Train Bank had to be removed to make way for the Smithsonian Affiliates Museum. Lewis said he had no ideas as to the future location of the Train Bank. In response to an Editor question,, Lewis said that he would try to preserve the wonderful Fred Harvey built news stand in

the depot. Lewis said that he recalled buying things at the news stand as a child. The Editor's impression is that the museum and parking facility will require a lot of money- Federal, city and private- and that much needs to be done before anything happens. (Thanks to George Alison for furnishing copies of *Morning News of Northwest Arkansas* articles.)

Larry Bouchet, former President & CEO of the A & M, has been active in the local business community. One of the earlier investments was the Little Sicily restaurant located near the Huntsville Avenue railroad tracks in Springdale. This venture is now closed. Bouchet and Fayetteville developer Ben Israel have teamed up to form Hispanic Holdings LLC. The purpose of the company is to tap the Hispanic market in Northwest Arkansas. The firm has invested about \$200,000 in Signature Square in Springdale. They have opened Angel Academy (full-service bilingual daycare) and hope to purchase the long closed Consumers store in Rogers with a view towards serving the Hispanic market in Rogers. They have also discussed a boxing arena. (Thanks again to George Alison for the *Morning News of Northwest Arkansas* articles)

On Saturday, April 19 four Chapter members visited the Railroad Museum of Oklahoma in Enid. It is a great museum and an article will follow. We saw a big BNSF stack train heading east at the museum. The containers reflect the huge U, S. trade deficit. It turns out that it is cheaper to store the empty containers in New Jersey than to return them to the Far East. Thus the area around Newark and Elizabeth is becoming home to tens of thousands of empty containers. Most readers are aware that New Jersey has a large number of seriously polluted sites stemming from years of intense chemical industry production. The sites are expensive to clean up but by using the sites for container storage the sites obviate the current need to clean up. A second effect is that container storage sites also stop areas from being redeveloped. (*Morning News of Northwest Arkansas* via George Alison)

## Report from Chapter Archivist Al Kaepfel

The Mullins Library of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, is interested and eager to obtain books and documents related to railroad history. The Library has a special interest in materials pertaining to Arkansas and its Northwest area, but they will be pleased to receive items referencing railroads throughout the United States and the world.

Chapter founding member Bob Oswald has donated 154 books to the Mullins Library. A bookplate was placed in each book, which indicated that the book came from the collection of our chapter of the NRHS and that it was a gift specifically of Bob Oswald. Further, it should be noted that Bob placed a value on the collection and will use it as a legitimate income tax deduction.

Our next step will be to turn over to the Mullins Library the club's own collection, which is presently stored at the Shiloh Museum. This will include books, manuals, rosters and other data, since the Library is enthusiastic to receive such materials and place them in their collection. Several members of the faculty at the University are particularly interested in receiving and using these new items and hope to have much more become available.

All Chapter members are encouraged to donate historical materials of all types to the University through the ABMT chapter. In some cases, the interest of the Library will be such that they will provide you, the donor, with photocopies of your documents; they will then have the originals in their special collection and you will have true copies for your continuing reference; each such

case will be considered individually. As soon as you have decided which items you would like to donate for the use and study of all those interested, please phone Al Kaepfel at 479-927-3163, member/archivist, who will make all of the arrangements.

It should be noted that all books and documents which we give to the Mullins Library will be available to all members to study and enjoy at the Library. The University is local and accessible so let all of us contribute as much railroad history as we can.

Finally, neither the chapter nor the Library are in a position to accept materials related to model railroading.

*(Editor's comment-* Both Bob Oswald and Al Kaepfel deserve our deepest thanks for helping to preserve railroad history and that of Northwest Arkansas. This is a "win win" situation for all concerned. It also enables you to control the disposition of your railroad papers, books and documents while you are still alive.

At one time the Mullins Library had a subscription to *Railway History* published by the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society that appears to have lapsed in the 1980s. You can see the missing volumes by visiting the Mullins Library web site. The Mullins Library also has a Special Collection where rare items are made available to researchers in a carefully monitored environment. The Special Collection would be a fine home for items such as timetables, passes, maps or *Official Guides*. The last time I checked the Special Collection had exactly **one** 1940s Official Guide in its collection.)

## AMTRAK Trip Report

*(I thought this was an interesting trip report as it reflects the view of a college freshman. He must be an engineer as he seemed concerned about Amtrak's erratic timekeeping record. This trip report came courtesy of Friends of Amtrak -Scrambler Editor)*

**May 9, 2002, 3:35 PM EDT:** We're now well outside Boston on Amtrak's Lake Shore Limited #449. Our scheduled departure time was 1:45 PM, and we departed Boston South Station at about 1:50. After stopping at Back Bay, Framingham, and Worcester, I believe our next stop is Springfield, MA. Unfortunately they haven't printed the newest schedule for this train, so I don't have a timetable with all the stops. They said we can get a national schedule in Albany. We're supposed to get there sometime during the 6 o'clock hour tonight.

I believe our scheduled arrival time in Chicago is 10:45 AM tomorrow, May 10. I'm on my way home to Los Angeles from my first year of college in Boston with a few friends (who will be named later). The scenery has been beautiful and I'm taking lots of pictures (as usual).

We're slowing down considerably now. We've only stopped once to let a freight train go by. I hope it stays that way. It's very convenient to have outlets right at our seat.

**4:13 PM EDT:** We just arrived in Springfield.

**5:11 PM EDT:** We're passing beautiful scenery. We seem to be in a canyon with a substantial river. Unfortunately it's a cloudy day so the pictures won't look as good as they might. I also discovered that I've already taken 21 shots-too many for the first 3.5 hours of the trip.

**5:44 PM EDT:** We're currently stopped in Pittsfield, MA. I bought a Garlic Herb Turkey sandwich a while back. It was very good, but also very expensive (\$5.75).

**6:40 PM EDT:** We're now moving quite quickly. The landscape is slightly more open than it was before, but there are still trees on each immediate side of us. We passed a farm with American buffalo a short time ago, but it was too fast for me to get a picture.

On a side note, I've noticed that our train seems to be able to gain speed surprisingly quickly as opposed to previous trains I've taken. I'm assuming this is due to the locomotives being fairly new (though I don't know exactly how new they are).

I think we are quickly approaching Albany (we just slowed way down-to a stop, in fact). I can see buildings and also what looks like a very new (and perhaps unfinished) station just ahead. I just watched another Amtrak train from tracks next to ours pull in there.

**7:32 PM EDT:** We're stopped in the Albany-Rensselaer station at the moment. There seemed to be some confusion when we first arrived because this stop is normally a significant layover point. Part of the reason for this is that the New York half of the Lake Shore Limited has to be attached to our part, making the train at least twice its original length. This includes the addition of a new cafe car (with tables) a diner car, and a number of coaches and sleepers. But once we stopped, we weren't initially allowed to detrain. Many passengers were complaining because they've taken this route for many years and apparently had never had to wait like that. An Amtrak guy came along and said they're trying to "expedite the train," part of which seems to include shortening the layover. The whole situation isn't completely clear to me.

In any case, we're still stopped at the station, having backed up a bit (it's now 7:42). I'm not sure when the time zone changes, so I'll have to figure that out.

**8:02 PM EDT:** We departed Albany a few minutes ago. It's almost dark. And I still haven't gotten a timetable.

**11:32 PM EDT:** They didn't announce the last stop, probably so as not to wake people up. The stop before that was Utica. I'm going to try to sleep now....hopefully until at least 9. I think I get an extra hour since we're going towards earlier time zones.

**May 10, 8:50 AM CDT:** We're now stopped in Elkhart, Indiana, though not at the station. I'm not even completely sure if Elkhart is a stop on our train. Last night after I put my computer away for the night I didn't fall asleep for a while. I was awake for our arrivals into both Syracuse (the first stop they didn't announce) and Rochester. Soon after that I fell asleep for a while, before waking up with the train stopped in Cleveland. It was about 4:30 (EDT) at that point.

I wished I could have taken a picture there. The Cleveland Browns Stadium is right next to the station and is quite impressive, especially at night. But my eyemodule was put away and it was way too dark for a real picture:

After Cleveland I was in and out of sleep for the rest of the night. Before long the sun started coming up behind us, and I was able to get a picture of it. We also were running right along one of the Great Lakes for a short time (though I don't know which one) which I was also able to get pictures of.

Toledo (which was about three stops after Cleveland) was a service stop, so I was able to get out there and take a picture. Despite the considerable amount of space each coach passenger gets, I still found it very difficult to sleep comfortably. Of course part of this is due to the fact that I'm still in regular clothes and I have things in my pockets which keep me from being too comfortable. Also, they've

kept the car slightly cooler than is comfortable for what I'm wearing. Part of that is my fault though, since I forgot to wear the pants I was planning to wear.

I never got that timetable, but I believe we are very close to on time. We should arrive in Chicago in about two hours.

**9:12 AM CDT:** We're now arriving in South Bend, Indiana.

**10:46 AM CDT:** We should be arriving in Chicago in a few minutes. I just fell asleep again.

**2:12 PM CDT:** We're currently sitting in the waiting room at Chicago Union Station waiting to board our train. I'm not sure exactly when boarding will start. After setting our stuff down, my friends and I went upstairs to the food area (which was quite impressive) and got some lunch. We went for a short walk. I've never been to Chicago before besides a layover at O'Hare. It's a beautiful day outside and we walked two blocks down to the Sears Tower. It was \$10 to go up, so we just looked and took some pictures (I only took my eyemodule). We were both very impressed by the city.

**5:24 PM CDT:** Shortly after my last entry, an announcement was made saying that the boarding of our train (Southwest Chief #3) would be briefly delayed. The train's scheduled departure time was 3:15. I hoped by brief they didn't mean an hour. Fortunately this was not the case, and we were on board shortly after 3:30.

The On Board Chief quickly began making his announcements, and a few minutes later, we were moving. I was impressed by how quickly we departed Chicago. Unfortunately, one of the chief's announcements was that there was no Sightseer car on the train. No reason was given, but I assume that there must have been something wrong with the one they would normally use and no replacement was available.

I just heard a sound equivalent to a shopping cart falling over and then our train came to a quick (but not especially sudden halt). That sound was probably just part of the brakes, and I now see that a freight train is passing us on the right (our compartment is on the left). Oh, some guy just came on the PA and said that the emergency brake was pulled because there is a loose cable that they have to fix. He said the conductor is looking for it right now. That noise might have the cable coming loose. I hope it's a brief delay. We're already about a half hour behind schedule.

I think Frank and I are going to go exploring a bit and try to find Molly in coach. Chris and Makoto are in the next sleeper over. Frank and I and Chris and Makoto are each sharing a standard bedroom. We're going to dinner at 7.

**8:45 PM CDT:** Dinner was great. It was really relaxing to sit there and just watch everything roll by. Frank, Makoto and I all had the New York steak with garlic mashed potatoes and green beans, which the On Board Chief (Ellery) recommended to us (he came by earlier on to see how we were doing). He talked to us more at dinner as well. He's from Riverside and has a 19 year old son. The waiter was really nice too.

During dinner we crossed over the Mississippi River into Iowa. I ran back to my room to grab my camera and take a few pictures. I came back and we had dessert. Chris and I got the chocolate truffle which we both agreed was a bit on the sweet side.

I forgot to mention before that our sleeping car attendant is a really cool guy named Gary. He's really nice and helpful. We just stopped in La Plata, Iowa. We were supposed to arrive there at 8:25, making us about 35 minutes late at the moment. Not bad at all.

**11:13 PM CDT:** We just arrived in Kansas City, MO. Our scheduled arrival time was 10:31, so we're just about 45 minutes behind schedule still. I'm just hoping we don't lose more time over night. We're supposed to be stopped here for 10 minutes, and we were going to take a look outside, but we decided not to. This will probably be my last entry for the night. We'll be stopping in a number of Kansas towns during the night, including Topeka and Dodge City. Then we'll pass through the southeast corner of Colorado in the morning.

**May 11, 10:00 AM MDT:** We're went through La Junta, Colorado, elevation 4,045. We stopped there for about 15 minutes, so we all got out and took some pictures. We all took a picture with Gary and Chris and Makoto's attendant.

We were close to an hour and a half late this morning but we've made up considerable time, and were only about 20 minutes late leaving La Junta. We're now on Mountain Time, the last time zone before Pacific. And because Arizona doesn't use Daylight Time, we'll actually be on Pacific time as soon as we get to Arizona even though we'll still technically be in the Mountain zone.

Our next stop is Trinidad, CO, elevation 5,971, at 10:27 AM. Eventually we'll reach about 7,500 feet.

Last night, shortly after Kansas City, the train stopped. Then we began backing up. Then we pulled forward again. This happened about three times, and we saw a guy in a raincoat (it was raining) standing outside. Then we saw a service truck parked between two of the tracks. We ended up on the third track from the left when we had started out on the far left track. I think something must have been wrong with one of the tracks because I watched 2 guys putting a danger sign and a flashing light on the track. We had no idea where we were except that there

was a sewage treatment plant right next to the track. Finally we were on our way again.

I watched a lightning storm in the distance for a while and talked to Maiani until I lost the signal, then went to bed as we were pulling out of Topeka, KS.

I was awakened this morning by the On Board Chief announcing that Dodge City would be the next stop and that we were about an hour and a half behind schedule. He also said that breakfast would be over in about 20 minutes, so I woke Frank up and we went and got Chris and Makoto. Frank and I both had eggs with potatoes and turkey sausage.

I think the next place we'll be able to get off is Albuquerque, NM at 4:47. We're supposed to be there for about a half hour. I can see now that we're approaching mountains. It's still mostly flat farmland around us. It's been that way since we woke up.

**1:48 PM MDT:** We just finished lunch. I had a Reuben sandwich, which was quite good. And I had New York cheesecake with strawberry topping for dessert. Towards the end of lunch we stopped in Las Vegas, NM. Our scheduled arrival there was 1:08, so I'd guess we're about a half hour late at the moment. If there aren't two tracks from Flagstaff to L.A., I bet we'll be pulling over for a freight train or two. Our next stop is Lamy, NM at 2:57.

**2:47 PM MDT:** They just announced that we're pulling on to a siding at a place called Fox so that the eastbound Southwest Chief #4 can pass.

**3:40 PM MDT:** We stopped in Lamy, NM a short time ago. We were only a few minutes late, and they just announced that we'll be in Albuquerque in an hour, although the schedule indicates we won't arrive until 4:47. This must mean that there is a lot of padding in the schedule on this segment. It makes sense since Albuquerque is a service stop anyway, so it would be OK if we spent some extra time there.

**5:19 PM MDT:** We're stopped in Albuquerque now. We arrived at about 4:20, almost a half hour early. Our scheduled departure is 5:20, so we should be leaving any second. There were a bunch of Native American stands with hand made jewelry, as well as a food stand with burritos. Frank and Molly and I all bought something at the stands, and Frank and I almost went to the nearby Coldstone's (ice cream) but we decided not to. Now I think we're going to watch a movie before our dinner at 7.

**7:34 PM PDT:** I had the steak again for dinner. The sun was setting, so I came back to get my camera. I was taking pictures of the sunset when I noticed smoke off in the distance. Shortly after that I saw an emergency vehicle getting on to the highway. A little while later I saw another one. Soon it became clear that it was a sizable fire.

At first I thought it was a car fire. Then, as we got closer, I couldn't see where it was coming from anymore. All I could see was smoke off to the right. We stopped very briefly at the Gallup stop, then, very soon after, I could see thick black smoke again on the left side. I ran back to my compartment (I had been standing in the hall where I could see out both sides) and started snapping shots. The sun was very close to setting, so I did the best I could with my camera settings. First I could see just smoke, then a large group of emergency vehicles, then a raging fire at what was apparently a motel. It looked like they had just about every available fire unit on the scene. I could only see one spray of water hitting the fire. Unfortunately we passed by quite quickly, so I couldn't really assess the situation.

We've been moving pretty quickly since we left Gallup, as we were before arriving. We're now on Pacific time, and our next stop is Winslow, AZ, scheduled for 8:24. We'll be at least a half hour late.

I neglected to mention that something went wrong with the bathrooms in our car around the time we entered New Mexico. They fixed them while we were in Albuquerque, but we were delayed about 20 minutes past our scheduled 5:20 departure.

**11:19 PM PDT:** We stopped in Williams Jct., AZ (the Grand Canyon stop) right as I was getting out of the shower. We were supposed to arrive there at 10:04, and I'm guessing we got there some time around 10:45. The next stop is Kingman, AZ at 12:15 AM. We'll pass into California shortly after that. I should be asleep by then.

I waited to take my shower until after we had left Flagstaff at around 10:00. But someone was in there the first time I went down. In the meantime Frank went ahead and went to sleep, having trouble getting a signal for his cell phone again. After showering, I consolidated my stuff in the compartment as much as possible so things will be easier in the morning.

I see that we're supposed to arrive at Fullerton at 6:39 AM tomorrow (May 12), but not arrive in L.A. until 8:40. Clearly they have padded the schedule significantly here, so it appears as though we should easily be on time. I doubt I will make another entry in the morning because we'll pretty much be waking up and leaving. They're starting breakfast service at 5AM and ending at 6:30, so there's no way we're gonna make it to that.

Overall I must say I have thoroughly enjoyed this trip, especially the Southwest Chief portion. I very much hope that Amtrak's funding is not cut and this and other long distance lines can continue to run uninterrupted.

## The Arkansas & Missouri Railroad Company

Federal Railroad Administrator Announces \$11 Million RRIF Loan To Arkansas & Missouri Railroad (FRA Press Release dated April 11, 2003)

“Federal Railroad Administrator Allan Rutter today announced the award of an \$11 million Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) direct loan to the Arkansas & Missouri Railroad, headquartered in Springdale, Ark.

The RRIF program is an innovative financing tool that offers eligible railroads, states and municipalities added flexibility in making rail infrastructure improvements become reality,” said Rutter. “RRIF is fully consistent with President Bush’s commitment to growing the economy and as such, I encourage railroads of all shapes and sizes to consider this program when developing their annual capital plans.” The \$11 million direct loan provides funding for the purchase of 141 miles of track from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad as well as track refurbishment, which will reduce the risk of any future derailments along the route. The track acquisition permits the Arkansas & Missouri Railroad to exchange rail traffic with BNSF, Union Pacific and Kansas City Southern Railroads. The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department supported the railroad’s loan application. The Arkansas & Missouri Railroad extends from Monett, Mo., to Fort Smith Ark.,

and serves 140 customers, some of which are rail-dependent for their shipping needs. The expansion and rehabilitation projects made possible by the loan are expected to promote additional economic development in the region. The term of the loan is 25 years.

Provided for in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), the RRIF Program authorizes the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to provide direct loans or loan guarantees for the acquisition, development, improvement or rehabilitation of existing or new intermodal or rail equipment facilities. Eligible borrowers include railroads, state and local governments and government sponsored authorities. Detailed information about the program is in the final rule in the July 6, 2000 *Federal Register* and on FRA’s website.”

*(Editor’s comment-*The press release must have been prepared by someone unfamiliar with the A & M. The original financing was granted by BN in 1986 in the form of a lease and purchase agreement. The newspapers of the time mentioned a purchase price of \$4-6 million.

Once the rail replacement program is finished the A & M will be an all welded rail railroad except for a six-mile stretch of jointed rail south of Monett.)

# ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER

## NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chapter No. 188 founded November 1987

5-2003

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The Chapter meets the third Thursday of each month (except December dinner meeting) at 7:00 PM Meetings are held at the Shiloh Museum's General Store, 118 West Johnson, Springdale, Arkansas. Visitors are welcome at all meetings. Annual dues for 2003 are \$35.00 for individuals and \$38.00 for a family. Please call 479-750-8165 for directions to the Shiloh Museum General Store.

ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER  
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**Please plan on attending  
The annual Chapter  
Potluck at the home of  
Bob and Tom Stark.  
Please mark your calendar for  
Saturday, May 17  
At 5:30 PM**

Free