

ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER

NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chapter No. 188 founded in 1987



2007 DIRECTORY OF OFFICERS

President	Gary McCullah
Vice President	Mitch Marmel
Secretary	Clare McCullah
Treasurer	Katherine Mindoro
Editor	Bill Merrifield
National Director	Chuck Girard
Board Director	Mike Sypult

NRHS Chapter Meets 7:00 PM Thursday, March 15, 2007 at the Shiloh Museum's General Store. Chapter meetings are cancelled due to inclement weather on days when the Springdale Public Schools are closed due to weather conditions.

This month's program by J P Bell is on the SP & S 700-Washington Narrative

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NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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The Scrambler

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Monthly News letter of the Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter, National Railway Historical Society

CHAPTER MINUTES February 15, 2007

The regular scheduled meeting of the Arkansas-Boston Mountain Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society was called to order at 7:00 PM on February 15, 2007 by President Gary McCullah, at the Shiloh Museum General Store in Springdale, AR. There were 17 members present.

Secretary, Clare McCullah's minutes from the January 2007 meeting were approved as stated in the *Scrambler* dated February 2007. The minutes were approved on a motion by Mitch Marmel and seconded by Bill Ussery.

Secretary's Note: Although the minutes from the last meeting were approved as read, this secretary has to correct her own work. In naming the original members attending last month's meeting, she neglected to mention David McDonald who is a founding member and who was present at the last meeting. I would like to offer my sincere apology to Mr. McDonald for the oversight on my part.

National Director, Chuck Girard, stated he only planned to go to the meeting in Chattanooga, TN. He wouldn't be able to attend both meetings as stated in the last *Scrambler*. A private company has contracted to take over the outside publishing of the NRHS bulletin. Another outside contractor has contracted to handle the membership renewals and database. Mr. Girard has printed off the National newsletter with the information about

the private contractors to pass around to the local membership. National is hoping that the contractors will be more efficient than the group of volunteers who do membership and publications at the present time. The volunteers haven't been up-to-date with the National publications. It is hoped that the new contractors can be timely with the National bulletins and membership information to the local Chapter members.

Scrambler Editor, Bill Merrifield, stated he is working on some of the technical aspects of the computer to edit the *Scrambler*. Mr. Merrifield stated that the Arkansas and Missouri's *A&M Express* came out with full-page article about the signs placed along their tracks.

Treasurer, Katherine Mindoro, was not in attendance so no Treasurer's report was read.

Membership Chairman, Chuck Girard, stated he was doing well with membership renewals. He only has four membership renewals left to be paid. He stated that, if you haven't paid your membership dues to Mr. Girard that you need to do so as soon as possible so they can be sent to the National membership committee. Time is running out. He is hoping this new company will end the nightmare of the membership information going to National. The change of Chapter number was discussed. It seems the number went from 158 to 188. Martin Post

called and asked National as to why the number had changed. It seems the number was changed when National went to a computerized system. Some of the members thought the number weren't to change. They thought the number was permanently assigned.

Special Events Chairman, Al Kaepfel, stated that the train show was a week from Saturday on February 24, 2007. He passed the list of volunteers around to members and reminded them to please cross off their names if they aren't going to be able to participate in the show. He gave out cards to the members and asked them to distribute them to friends and neighbors who may want to go to give them a discount on the price of the show. He stated that members will get in free. Mr. Kaepfel stated that he would bring items to sell at the show. He is hoping the Chapter can increase its funds with donations from the items. President McCullah stated that he will provide magazines for sale. Mr. Kaepfel stated that he rented a table for \$15.00 from Sugar Creek Model RR Club for the items to be sold. Mr. Kaepfel stated that he has sold \$22.00 worth of memorabilia before the show.

The next event will be Feather Fest. Mr. Kaepfel discussed the Quad Chapters Meet on June 23 and 24, 2007. Mr. Kaepfel, Tom Duggan, and JP Bell have set up a chance to take nighttime shoots of the trolley in Ft. Smith on Saturday night, June 23. On Sunday, June 24, the mixed A&M

train with passenger cars, freight cars, and the A&M caboose will be south-bound from Ft. Smith depot to Winslow, AR. Then the train will go to the site of the old Frisco round house for a photo opportunity. Then the train will go up to Winslow. There will be more photo opportunities available at the Winslow Tunnel and the surrounding area as well as Trestle Number One and at Lancaster Bridge. This is a rare train that last ran in 1991 or 1992. The A&M plans to have the caboose ready for the meet. There aren't any windows in it yet. The cost for the train will be \$80.00 for coach, \$90.00 for parlor car, and \$110.00 for the caboose. The cost will include the food on Saturday and Sunday, which is provided by the A&M. They are hoping to have rides available on the Ft. Smith trolley after the run to Winslow. Mr. Kaepfel stated that he needs club members to attend the meet and provide assistance with the events. He stated that he will need ushers, conductors, etc. He will be asking for assistance. A&M are expecting lots of photographers due to all of the photo opportunities. Brochures and flyers will be available at the Sugar Creek Train Show. They have started the distribution of brochures all over the area. Mr. Kaepfel stated that he would have to sell 30 tickets to break even and they already expect 50 guests. The City of Ft. Smith has provided materials for publicity and paid for the posters. Reservations are being taken at the Howard Johnson. It was rebuilt in the last 2 years. On Saturday night, a buffet will be held there. He encouraged the members to send in their

membership fees for the train ride and make their reservations at Howard Johnson who are giving a discount the NRHS members.

Programs and Activities Chairman, Mitch Marmel, brought a Philadelphia trolley badge. He stated that Mike's Train House is coming out with some new items with a model of the Electro Liner/Liberty Liner. Reservations for the cars can be made at the Eighteenth Street Train Shop in Fayetteville, AR.

Archivist, Al Kaepfel, stated this year is the 20th anniversary of the Chapter as of November 22, 2007. Nine of the founding members remain. Mr. Kaepfel stated that the Chapter wants to do something special for them. The Chapter they started has grown into an organization of over 50 members. Mr. Kaepfel requested NRHS funds as seed money for the celebration. Bob Stark made the motion to invest \$630.00 to \$650.00. The motion was seconded by Chuck Girard.

Map Committee Chairman, Travis Walls, didn't attend tonight's meeting because he is out of town. Al Kaepfel stated that he has the maps for the train show. President Gary McCullah agreed to arrange and set up the display of the maps at the train show on February 24. Mr. Kaepfel stated that he will be responsible for the maps after the train show and will get them back to Mr. Walls.

Sign Committee Chairman, Chuck Girard, stated he has made arrangements with Brenda Brown from A&M

to place the final sign at Lancaster. JP Bell, Chuck Girard, and David McDonald will ride the train with their tools and the sign to the area. They will be dropped off at the site, position the sign, and be picked up by the train again. They still need to put the backers of the other signs. Tom Duggan has volunteered to do the backings on the signs when he returns from his trip this week. Mr. Girard thought it would be great to have a photographer on board to take pictures of the placement of this last sign.

Old Business: Ray Tolar stated that he went to visit Bob Oswald. Mr. Tolar stated Mr. Oswald is progressing but not as fast as he would like. His therapist thinks he's improving. They have changed his medicine and hope this will help his progress. He needs visitors but it is a good idea to call Annie, his wife, to make sure it's Ok. Don't just drop in. Cards and prayers would be appreciated.

New Business: None stated by the Chapter membership.

The meeting was adjourned by President McCullah. President McCullah reminded the membership to donate to the coffee kitty.

Mike Sypult presented tonight's program on The Big 3 Rail Hubs.

Clare McCullah
Secretary of the Arkansas-Boston
Mountain Chapter
National Railway Historical Society

LOCALLY ON THE BEAM

Special Events Chairman, Al Kaepfel, Report:

The Great NWA Model Train Show took place on Saturday, 24 Feb. It was a success for both our Chapter and the Sugar Creek Model Railroad Club, the sponsors. Total attendance was about 1,000, up from 800 last year.

We had our G and N gauge trains and O gauge trolleys set up for the children to operate. At

times we were almost overwhelmed with kids, and parents. We prepared and gave out 240 Model Railroad Engineer Certificates to the boys and girls who love to drive the trains and trolleys; any number over 200 certificates I consider to be excellent attendance.

We moved a number of maps and a large quantity of other merchandise. We received donations totaling \$324.00; the only expense was a payment of \$12.00 to Sugar Creek for one display table; a net donation of \$312.00 to our treasury. All of the items were donated by our members. We give a very special thanks to each of you who gave us these materials.

Many club members donated time and were present to help with the kids and trains and to

attend to our table displays. There were plenty of members to spread the work and relieve all of us from any heavy burdens. To all of you our true thanks.

Finally we thank the Sugar Creek club. We attended as their guests. They gave us three display tables and more than adequate space for our three kids trains. This was very much appreciated.

IN THE YARDS

We still express our concerns and prayers for member Bob Oswald. Scrambler Editor, Bill Merrifield, was in Vancouver, Washington this past week attending memorial services for his sister, Elsie Carol Seeley.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE ANGEL'S SEAT

Wow! The Great NWA Model Train Show was a resounding success despite pounding rain nearly all morning and gale force winds in the afternoon. One could wonder what the crowd count would have been had the weather been pleasant! The public relation potential for our chapter was enormous and much good will towards our chapter was generated. Besides, it was downright fun for all of our chapter members who participated.

We still need items of interest such as personal experiences, photographs, historical events, travel, and oddities relating to railroads for publication in the Scrambler. I am deeply indebted to a few chapter members who have given or sent me items and I know that there are a hundreds of experiences of chapter members just waiting to be told! My e-mail address is WMERRIF@SBCGLOBAL.NET. Our box mailing address is on the cover of every Scrambler; or, just hand the stuff to me at our meetings. Don't worry so much about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. It's my job to make you look like an English major.

BRASS POUNDING DOWN THE LINE

There are still some rumblings about an extension of the Amtrak Heartland Flyer to Tulsa. Amtrak officials are quite aware that the 68,000 riders annually could be greatly increased linking Tulsa to the Fort Worth connection with the Texas Eagle to San Antonio and Chicago. Funding for the study of such a link would be provided by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and the Indian Nations Council Governments. Several possible routes include the former Frisco line, which now is operated by a short line.

TRAINS THROUGH MEMORY

THE KCS DISASTER AT NOEL, MISSOURI

For most of us, who are passionate about railroading, can and do get carried away by the romance and excitement of its history. But ever so often we need to reflect on the fact that railroading is a very se-

rious business and at times can be exceptionally hazardous. Then too, sharing space with a railroad also can be equally dangerous as illustrated in the account below. On August 3, 1969, a car carrying a rocket fuel component on a Kansas City Southern Railroad freight ignited and produced a series of events that led to a massive explosion, which threatened the lives of nearly one thousand residents of Noel, Missouri. The following is the second of a three part series on that disaster:

The blast from the exploding rail car was exceptionally damaging to most structures in Noel and along with the flying debris from the rail car, posed an instant threat to all human life. A number of the residents, awakened by the fire siren and smaller first explosion, were already outside their homes. Some were watching the activities associated with the fire while others, realizing the danger, were in the process of getting away from the fire. The blast knocked many of these people to the ground causing numerous injuries. Other citizens, who had not left their homes, were showered with flying glass and other building debris. One woman was killed by such flying debris. At the same time, huge parts of the boxcar crushed their way into homes and vehicles. One couple and their five children, who lived near the tracks, recognized the train car fire was dangerously near the propane storage yards and were about to leave in their autos when the blast occurred. A massive 25-foot chunk of the boxcar fell into their yard completely disabling one of the autos. Their home was completely demo-

lished. Several blocks away, an eight hundred pound railroad wheel fell through the roof of a house passed through three walls causing part of the house to collapse on a woman severely injuring her legs. Parts from the exploding boxcar were found up to three quarters of a mile away. Close to the blast, another man, his wife, and his grandmother were trying to flee from the fire in their car. Sensing eminent danger, the man ordered the two women to take shelter in a nearby ditch. Before he could clear the car the explosion occurred. All three were injured and hospitalized. The seven Noel firemen, who had themselves narrowly escaped death when the grain warehouse shielded their fire engine from the blast, quickly assessed the danger that the 90,000 gallons of propane posed. The explosion had heated the tanks and instantly activated the pop-off safety valves. Fires from the burning debris ignited the escaping gas and threatened perhaps an even greater explosion. Acting with incredible bravery, the men with other firefighters from nearby cities set up fire hoses and directed

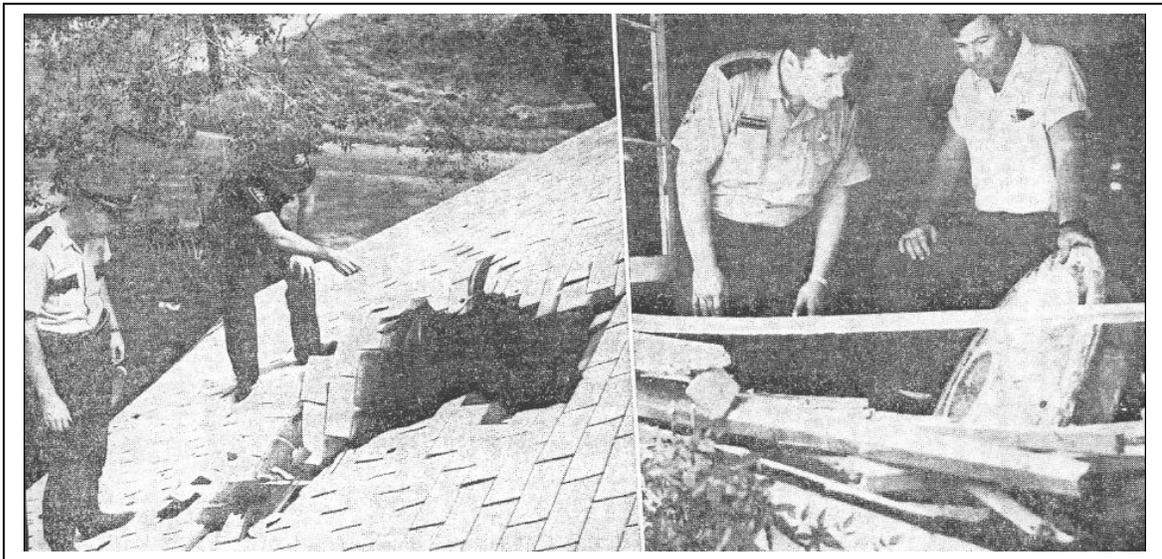
water on to the burning tanks in an effort to cool down the propane. As the call went out to other nearby cities, fire, police, and medical assistance began to pour into the darkened city. An emergency medical aid center was set up. Firemen and policemen began a systematic search for victims trapped in the debris of their homes and vehicles. Ambulances began to move injured to nearby hospitals. More than 100 persons were injured but few were seriously hurt. Two persons died; one from the blast directly and one from a heart attack. At least sixty homes were destroyed or severely damaged. More than fifty business structures were damaged. The glass windows of many autos were blown out and numerous cars and trucks were damaged beyond repair. Five railroad cars were destroyed along with significant damage to the rails and roadbed. All of this must have seemed so surreal since the sky in that sultry summer night appeared to emit snow-like white flakes from the destroyed containers of the ammonium perchlorate.

The following is part of Donna Camp's eyewitness account of what she experienced in Noel, Missouri that Sunday morning.

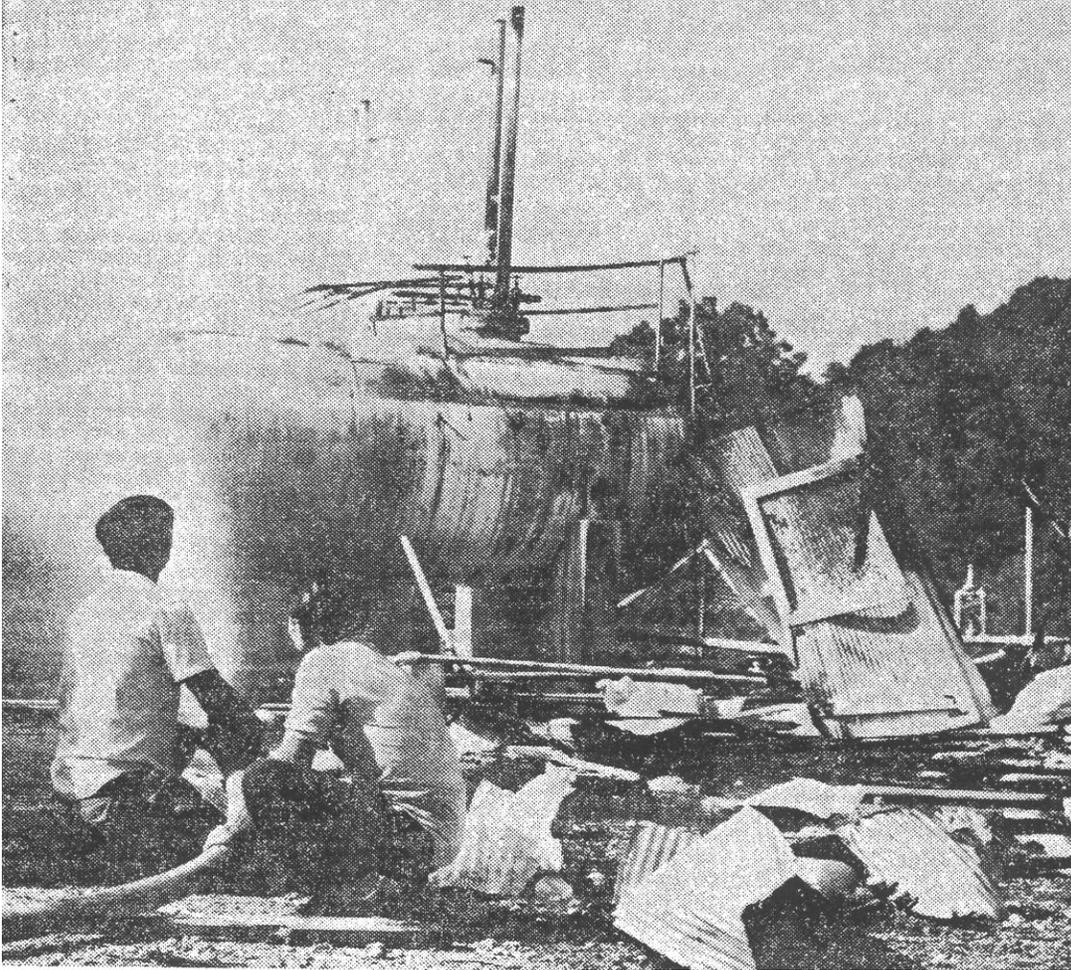
In 1969, I was living in Bentonville, Arkansas having moved there from Decatur, Arkansas. About 4:00 AM on August the 3rd, I was awakened by a distant, thunderous, explosion that seemed to be west of Bentonville. I dressed and drove to Decatur as my thoughts were for the safety of my relatives and friends there. In the course, I

learned that the explosion was not in Decatur but on the Kansas City Southern Railroad in Noel, Missouri. I decided to drive to Noel, going north on highway 69 out of Decatur. As I neared Noel, I saw huge pieces of metal lying around. I arrived on the scene at daybreak and noticed gray flakes of ash falling slowly to the ground. There was broken glass from storefronts, homes, and automobiles and pieces of railroad cars scattered all over town. Railroad cars were still burning. From what I could ob-

serve, most of the stores and homes in Noel sustained damage that ranged from minor to total destruction. Flying debris had severed electrical lines cutting power to most of the city. I saw where an 800-pound railroad boxcar wheel had sailed over two blocks and broke through the roof of a house and rolled through three walls injuring a woman occupant. I stood in unbelief, like time was standing still. As I later learned, time did stop for two citizens as the result of the disaster.



Rescue police examine the house where the 800 lb boxcar wheel passed through the roof and several walls of this home coming to rest near the living room front window. Part of the interior of the house collapsed, injuring a woman occupant. The house was nearly three blocks away from the blast.



Volunteer firefighters keep a steady stream of water on burning propane tanks in an effort to keep them from exploding. The danger to these men is quite apparent. The tanks were later emptied in an emergency burn-off.

The third and conclusion in this series will appear next month, which will chronicle the extent of the relief from nearby communities, state and federal governments and the response from the railroad in the aftermath of the Kansas City Southern Railroad-Noel disaster. We wish to credit The McDonald County Press, The Neosho Daily News, The Joplin Globe, and the Tulsa Daily World as sources and to thank Donna Camp and Ray Toler of Springdale who furnished these sources. Editor.

ELEPHANT SAFARI IN CHESTER, ARKANSAS???

Some forty-five or fifty years before the Winslow Tunnel was expanded in 1969/1970 by the Morrison Knudsen Construction Company for the Frisco elephants, *yes, elephants*, were spotted on top of the hill through which the tunnel passed. Next month we will feature a delightful little article on this, written by Beth Innis Rogers, that Tom Duggan found while browsing through files at the Shiloh Museum.

SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT RAILROADING?

Answers to last month's questions:

QUESTION: The Texas and St. Louis Railroad was later renamed. What was the new name?

ANSWER: THE COTTON BELT and as to why, the answer is obvious-bales of cotton.

WHAT IS IT? The object in last month's edition was an antique blowtorch used on a French Railroad. It has an engraving of a 4-6-2 steam locomotive and a company mark of UNIS-FRANCE No. 42. Since the device was only about five inches tall its use is your guess.

QUESTION: What is the American name given to a 4-6-2 steam locomotive configuration?

QUESTION: If you received a train order typed on this Missouri Pacific Railroad typewriter shown below, what would be unusual about it?



SCALE RAILROADING

Event Reminders: March 10-11-The Great American Train Show, Kemper Arena, Kansas City, MO.
April 14- The Cotton Belt Railroadiana Show and Sale, 1700 Port Road, Pine Bluff