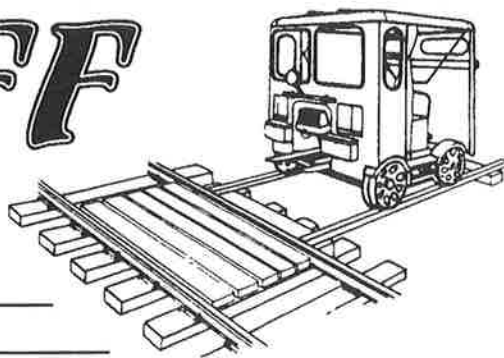


THE SETOFF

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN
RAILCAR OPERATORS ASSOCIATION (NARCOA)

January/February 1995



Sixth Annual "Almost Heaven" August Meet Attracts Over 70 Motorcars to West Virginia

By Hugh Cain

West Virginia's unofficial theme song sums up the day: Almost Heaven—but this time on a motorcar. August 20th arrived cloaked in an early morning fog. At least the South Branch of the Potomac was fogged in. This was not about to deter the participants in the sixth annual running on the South Branch Valley Railroad.

Wray Dudley had 71 motorcars and hyrailers signed up. When the totals were in for the day, 66 vehicles made this trip. Cars were here from 14 states, with Virginia and Pennsylvania being tied for 15 each. Travel distance awards go to Mr. and Mrs. Otis Madden of Louisiana, MO, and Roger Dickinson of Milton, VT.

A second mailing had informed us of a change in the running schedule. An early morning run was to be made

*Wray Dudley's
ex-SCL MT19
at Kingwood,
WV, in the
lineup on the
West Virginia
Northern on
August 21st.
See story on
page 12.*

Wray Dudley photo

to Petersburg, WV, and back. This necessitated the cars making this trip to be on the tracks and ready to run on Friday evening. The remainder of the cars would "set on" later on Saturday morning, while the rest of us were returning from Petersburg.

Susan Cease, Kathy Page, Josh Cease and Rachel Shelton manned the check-in desk and made that evolution a whole lot smoother. The actual set-ons were directed by Roger Dickinson, Jeff Shelton, John Cease, Walter Mattuch and many others. Three tracks had been made available for the set-ons and this made this previously time consuming event proceed very quickly. All in

(Continued on page 11)



Meets

Members who have organized meets are encouraged to advertise those events here. We will publish all notices received. Be as complete as possible in providing details of the trip: time schedules, costs, restrictions and conditions for attending the event, and total mileage of the motorcar trip. Send materials to Dick Ray, 5 Hemlock Place, Randolph, NJ 07869, or to Hank Brown, 622 Oak Street, Cottage Grove, WI 53527. If time is short, send them directly to the Editor. Thank you.

April 21-23, 1995: Florida Central RR at Wooten Park in Tavares, FL. Safety meeting will be held at 8:00 a.m. Saturday. AARO membership required. Total run is 146 miles. Turning points: Friday afternoon, Sorrento; Saturday, Umatilla and Winter Gardon; Sunday a.m., Mt. Dora and Sorrento. Dining out Friday night at the Green House Restaurant and a catered dinner at the depot in Mt. Dora on Saturday evening. Sunday breakfast will be on the porch at the Lake Side Inn in Mt. Dora, dutch treat. All transportation via motorcars. Advance registration is requested. \$50.00 per motorcar includes \$40.00/motorcar with 10 car minimum and \$10.00/car to cover expenses and the \$100.00 insurance registration. Pay when checking in. NARCOA Rulebook will be the guide for motorcar inspection: wheels, brakes, lights, fire extinguisher, first aid kit and red flag. No grounded axles! For information, contact: Jack and Susie Whitt, P.O. Box 356, 8023 Bloomfield Avenue, Yalaha, FL 34797, or phone (904) 324-3868.

June 17-18: The first two-day meet on the Wisconsin Central will cover the ex-Green Bay & Western trackage between Plover and East Winona, WI, 262 miles, round trip. AARO insurance is required, and the trip is limited to 30 motorcars. The registration fee is \$135.00 per motorcar, plus \$1.00 per person. For further information, send an LSASE to Wisconsin Central '95, c/o Mike Paul, 1780 Maricopa Drive, Oshkosh, WI 54904.

HEART OF THE HEARTLANDS Chapter sponsors the following events. All events are subject to change due to traffic or weather. Motorcar operators must have AARO insurance and be members of NARCOA. Registrations must be completed in advance of the ride. Members or chapters with ride agreements have preference in attendance. For more information, send LSASE to: Heart of the Heartlands, P.O. Box 394, Cherryvale, KS 67335, or contact: Jean O'Dell 3623 Mosher Road, Parsons, KS 67357.

April 9: Chanute to Benedict & Cherryvale.

May 13: Cherry Blossom Festival at Cherryvale (Swap meet at depot 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.).

May 14: Cherryvale to Chanute & Benedict (RT).

June 11: Fredonia to N. Winfield (two-way RT).

July 9: Independence to Collinsville, OK.

September 10: Coffeyville to Chetopa.

October 8: Cherryvale to Iola.

The NORTHERN CENTRAL RAILCAR ASSOCIATION sponsors runs over the former Northern Central Ry. from New Freedom to York, PA. Distance is 17 miles each way, and, in warmer months, multiple runs are made, making it possible to log over 100 miles along this historic and beautiful line. See the station where Abe Lincoln was photographed on his way to deliver the Gettysburg Address, and pass through the Howard Tunnel, bored in 1834! Runs are organized nearly every other weekend throughout the entire year. Memberships cost \$60.00, and meet participants must have AARO insurance. For membership information and this year's meet schedule, contact Mike Billet, 1010 Felton Road, Red Lion, PA 17356.

The WALKERSVILLE SOUTHERN RR sponsors the following events. Contact the railroad at: P.O. Box 651, Walkersville, MD 21793, or phone: (301) 898-0899 (Mon.-Fri., 9-11:00 a.m. EST) for more information.

Brushcutting meets will be held on the following dates. Motorcars and handcars are welcome, and runs will be made at the end of the day's work: February 11, March 11, March 25, April 8, April 29, May 6, June 10.

May 20: Second Annual Handcar/Steamcar Meet. Bring your handcar, velocipede or steamcar (you've still got time to build one, get that boiler inspected and licensed and ready to go) for 15 - 20 miles of fun on this beautiful line.

June 17: Fifth Annual NARCOA Motorcar Meet: 15 - 20 miles of running open to motorcars.

September 9: Walkersville Southern Society Members Day, open also to motorcar owners in NARCOA.

HOOSIER RAILCARS hosts the following meets:

February 18: Knightstown and Shirley RR. Contact Bob Guy, Leesburg, IN, (219) 453-3263, or Donald Schultz, Logan, OH, (614) 385-9780 for more information.

February ??: Indianapolis Great American Train Show. We hope to be involved in this year's show at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. Details are pending. Contact John Simms, (317) 852-6843.

March 4: Indiana Southern Railroad. Details and location are pending. Contact Stan Conyer, (812) 342-0565, or Phil Childress, (812) 339-8542 as the date gets closer.

Editor's Notes

By Gene Tucker

It's been a relatively short time since the Fall issue was delivered to you, so this issue is somewhat shorter than the last. As we transition into the new schedule of six issues per year, things should even out a bit more.

We're always happy to receive news clippings and related articles, which usually don't translate well into *THE SETOFF*. In that vein, we should mention an article sent along from the December 26, 1994, issue of The Boston Globe sent to us by David Tehbodo of Fairfield, Iowa, which relates the story of David's delivery of a motorcar to Bill Hunter of Winterport, Maine.

AARO Insurance: Ron Zammit called to say that AARO Insurance policies will soon be on the way, and that several folks had taken it upon themselves to call the insurance agents directly, inquiring about AARO insurance. This has caused extra work for the agents and tends to cloud the issue a little, so Ron puts out the request not to call the agents, pretty please.

NARCOA Board of Directors

Officers:

- President - Ron Zammit, CA
- Vice President - Stan Conyer, IN
- Secretary - Joel Williams, NJ
- Treasurer - Tom Norman, MT

Directors by Area:

- Area 1: Dick Wilhelm, NY
- Area 2: Joel Williams, NJ
- Area 3: Stan Conyer, IN
- Area 4: Tom Johnson, NC
- Area 5: Jack Whitt, FL
- Area 6: Hank Brown, WI
- Area 7: Carl Schneider, IA
- Area 8: Bob Layfield, Canada
- Area 9: Bill Pollard, AR
- Area 10: Tom Norman, MT
- Area 11: Ron Zammit, CA

Directors at Large (non-voting): John Nolan, Mike Paul
 Recording Secretary: Mike Paul

Guidelines for Submitting Materials For Publication in *THE SETOFF*

1. Our editorial policy is to cheerfully publish in *THE SETOFF* all materials received, although they may be subject to editing for space considerations.
2. Photos and materials submitted for publication in *THE SETOFF* cannot be returned.
3. We cannot publish copyrighted materials such as: photos, posters, cartoons, or articles without written permission from the author or publisher. Written permission must be provided by the sender at time of submission.
4. Meet stories, technical articles and lengthy submissions should be typed or printed.
5. Ads, meet notices, and short articles may be handwritten.
6. Photos should be either black and white or sharp color photos. Photos print best when the subject of the photo is large. A picture of a motorcar sitting atop a bridge, for example, where the image of the motorcar is very small, or blends in with the background of the picture, doesn't print well. Please label the back of the picture as to its subject matter and who took the picture. Please do not send slides.
7. Finally, send materials to *THE SETOFF* editor by the deadline, the 15th of each odd-numbered month (January, March, May, July, September, November).

THE SETOFF

Volume 8 Number 4

SETOFF Editor	Gene Tucker 1004 N. Kentucky St. Arlington, VA 22205
SETOFF Co-Editor	Deanna Baird 2700 S. First St. Arlington, VA 22204
SETOFF Contributing Editor	Dick Ray Hemlock Pl. Randolph, NJ 07869
NARCOA President	Ron Zammit 469 Compana Arroyo Grande, CA 93420
NARCOA Roster Coordinator	Joel Williams Box 82 Greendell, NJ 07839

THE SETOFF is published quarterly by the North American Railcar Operators Association (NARCOA) to promote safe operation of railroad motorcars, and to encourage fellowship and exchange of information among motorcar enthusiasts. Membership in NARCOA, which includes a subscription to *THE SETOFF*, is \$10.00 per year, and is available from Joel Williams, Box 82, Greendell, NJ 07839.

From the President:

By Ron Zammit

Happy 1995. To start off the new year, I'd like to give you a few thoughts about our hobby. While I may not have the best English skills, I hope these items prove readable and logical.

This hobby seems to be divided into groups of two types of people, and I'll refer to them as #1 and #2. (I'm not including the bootleggers, those who ride without permission.)

Let's look at type #1 first. They are the groups that started the ball rolling years ago. Most of us folks in the hobby longer than five years have been, or still are, this type. The motorcar was cheap, about \$100, no insurance, little or no rules, few motorcars on the run, and the railroad didn't charge. While safety and liability are important issues, most folks didn't worry about them; everyone knew everyone else and nothing bad could possibly happen. In lots of cases, there's a "sweetheart" deal where a railroad is available on an "as needed" basis, so the people always have something to run. For about \$500, depending on the cost of the trailer, you were ready to go! Organizations or groups for this type of involvement usually revolve around one or two people who run the whole show. This person does the newsletter, makes what rules there are, arranges things with the railroads, runs the excursions, and will usually fix a member's motorcar. The members just want to run. Period.

Evolving out of groups of type #1, #2 works differently. To handle the increasing number of people in the hobby, and to interest more railroads, the most notable change is *organization*. One person can't deal with all the issues generated by a large membership: insurance, liability concerns, safety issues, the FRA, and the Class 1's or large regionals. Therefore, a more intricate organization is called for.

This organization is inevitable. It is obvious to everyone that to get on branch lines of many large railroads, a professional stance must be taken. One cannot just take the old motorcar by corporate headquarters of the UP in Omaha and talk them into a little excursion on a soon-to-be-ripped branch line in northern Idaho! No, lots of homework must be done. And if it isn't, well, we miss the chance to ride, forever.

Now, I realize this is of little interest to the person who rides once a year on a "sweetheart" railroad. But a railroad such as this is extremely rare, and a wonderful circumstance these days. I know of little of this in the west, where we have had to have the organization, insurance, rules, etc., in order to establish a working relationship with the railroads. There will always be some of these types of runs, where little is required. One in South Dakota comes to mind. Treasure them, they are rare.

To allow this hobby to grow in the obvious direction, a group of us (type #2) have been working to change NARCOA to a democratically run (meaning you need to be involved) organization. I'm no politician and I don't see anyone involved who is. We are just doing our best to open this up and let you see what has been done, and find direction for the future. We will make mistakes, but our hearts are in the right place: to secure and better our hobby.

In future issues of *THE SETOFF*, I'll try to answer questions that I hear from members who are baffled, upset, angry, or whatever. Also, I'll try to explain the workings of NARCOA and AARO. If there's something you do not understand, please write me. If I get enough questions, I'll run a little column every issue, and try to clear the air. Perhaps we can even get a "forum" column going where issues are discussed in print.

Now let me turn to the insurance issue. (And I hope I can get this all correct, you must keep in mind, I greatly dislike insurance, so this is not easy for me to keep straight! Good thing I don't run it!)

Most motorcar groups carry third party liability insurance on most runs. The insurance company is the first party, operators and the railroads are the second party. This means all non-operating motorcar passengers are third party, as well as the general public. For example, if you hit a school bus in a crossing, the passengers on that bus are third party and are covered. If at the same time someone in your family is injured, they are third party and the insurance company may pay, but they, your passengers, have agreed via the release not to sue.

Keep in mind that all of your non-operating passengers have agreed via the releases not to sue. So in a way they are a special case to the third party, for if the insurance company chooses

(Continued on next page)

From the President:

(Continued from previous page)

not to pay on their possible claims, they can't sue to win. (Anyone can sue, but the releases are valid, so it would be next to impossible to win such a lawsuit.)

The first party insures the second party from the third party. Operators and the railroads on which they run are added as "additional insured" on the policy. We do this via joining a non profit corporation, AARO, which in turn has purchased the policy. This insurance, for \$5,000,000, may be tapped by the third parties only.

Again, if you hit someone's motorcar with yours, the damage is not covered. If you hurt the other operator's mate, or other passenger, they are third parties, they are "covered." (But they have agreed in the releases that they will not sue, so they are not covered because of the release, unless the insurance company steps forward and pays out of the goodness of its heart.) And YES, again, the releases are valid. Otherwise, the skydivers, mountain climbers, deep sea divers (for sport) would have been removed from the scene long ago. Releases are not valid for your renting a dwelling for your home, nor are they valid for your job. But no one is forcing you into the dangers of motorcar operation, and releases for you and your passengers are valid. They will be (and have been) used if needed, to make sure that you and your passengers assume all costs of the risks you take on the excursions. Please keep this in mind, and don't sign, and therefore don't go, if this bothers you. This is in keeping with the understanding that motorcar operators, as well as their passengers, have agreed to assume all risks of their being on and about the railroad's property.) Remember, we are not covered as in major medical where the insurance company will step in automatically.

Now any of us can go buy insurance. The agents love to sell it. We can even try to get a third party policy, and will succeed. But is it any good? One year I, unknowing, operated with a local group on five railroads with a policy for "walking tours of railroad yards" and the policy cost a little over \$100, for all of us!! Do you think we could have collected on this? Some people say: "But it got us on the railroad, so it must be okay!" Well, the railroads trusted us to get it straight, and if we had had a claim, we all would

have been in a mess. And the railroads would not have let us back. Over \$2,000 was collected from members, and \$117.59 paid to the insurance company. No accounting was done, so the money disappeared into the pockets of the club member in charge. After this scam, I got more involved.

The AARO insurance policy is designed for our hobby. It protects all operators and the railroad from all valid third party claims. There are many safeguards to protect us from the insurance industry pitfalls which can plague special policies. The person who designed the policy works for the movie industry, knows how to insure unusual events, and knows the insurance industry. For example, he sent pictures and videos of our operations to the insurance company and asked that they review them. At his request, the company had to then return the materials by mail, and the package is yet to be opened. If, in court, the company ever claimed they did not know we were operating motorcars on the AARO policy, then the unopened, but postmarked package would be used in court!

While the AARO policy was rock solid for railroad operations, it had a soft side for attack from within the motorcar hobby—those disgruntled few among us. And there are always a few. People complained about the program from the beginning, and the AARO policy has been investigated in at least four states: CA, OR, NJ, and MI. It has always been given a clean bill of health. Additionally, the carrier and AARO itself have been harassed by members and wannabe members.

The causes for this are hard to explain, but I'll try a few. One person wanted a copy of the policy. Given my experience with bogus policies, I can understand why. AARO's policy has been available for inspection at AARO excursions and NARCOA meetings, but is not passed out for fear it (a copy) can be used with a railroad to get a run, without the proper paper work and the fee, \$100. Rather than go to an excursion and see the policy like everyone else does, this person insisted on his own copy, and issued complaints for months.

One independent motorcar group, with their own insurance, wanted to hold a joint meet with an AARO group. This is impossible with true third party coverage. (Who is the third party with two policies in effect?) Think about what

(Continued on next page)

From the President:

(Continued from previous page)

third party coverage means and try to imagine a claim if two separate policies were in effect at the excursion. You see how irrational an idea this is. This wouldn't "blow up" until an accident occurred, and the companies each found out about the other. Think they'd pay?

Then there are the people who claim their homeowner's policy covers them, their business insurance covers them, or their automobile policy covers them. (The auto company may get you some coverage, but not for certain third party claims and not for the railroad, its property and employees.) I've even had one person wanting to be self insured. Who's going to work out the legal details for this?

While it has not always worked smoothly, AARO has, with the direction of John Nolan, provided an amazing amount of insurance: \$5,000,000 for a very reasonable price. (We all owe John a big thank you for this. Can you imagine dealing with the insurance company, the railroads and over 500 of us?) I have to pay over \$400 a year for liability coverage of \$500,000 on my car. Think about this folks, we had a bargain here.

We, as a group, have established an excellent record: three years and no claims. But the companies are tired of dealing with all the complaints. Every complaint has to be investigated, and that costs money. That money was not included in the original costs. This year AARO paid about \$50,000 for the policy. If you figure the broker gets maybe \$5,000, the wholesaler \$5,000 and the carrier \$40,000 for putting \$5,000,000 at risk, then this is not a lot of money for them. This is for a hobby that operates on rail (which very few insurance companies will touch with a legitimate policy) and a hobby for which they don't know how to rate the risks.

Another fact to think about: we dribbled that \$50,000 in all year, as people joined. Most companies want it UP FRONT or they charge financing charges. Also, ever hear of an end-of-policy audit? The company will look for increased risk during the policy, and charge more at the end. This was negotiated away, so what we have paid is all we owed. One last point: our insurance company has the highest rating in Best's and is an admitted company. This thing has been a

fantastic deal. AARO got us CSX, Burlington Northern, Wisconsin Central, Canadian National, and a large number of smaller lines. Nearly all the excursions in the U.S. that have insurance use AARO, so you have a wide range of choices. AARO has the only valid policy I know of. It has been a resounding success.

Let me add a little note here. I hear complaints all the time: AARO is too expensive. And I also hear: "where does the money go? I have questions as to if the money is being spent correctly." Without any proof as to the concern, I may as well have been asked: "When did you quit beating your wife?" Do you understand my point here? These statements are damning by their being voiced. What is really being said by such a person is that AARO is suspect. If that is true, then I challenge the person(s) with the problem to come forward and investigate. NARCOA and AARO are open groups run by volunteers. Sure we haven't done the greatest job of getting the information out; we're overwhelmed in getting it set up. This is all new. Join us and it'll all go faster. If you find a problem let me know.

If you need a cheaper hobby, find it. To take a track motorcar out on the rails (as a type #2 group) is going to cost. Security, stability, and variety (new lines) are going to cost. I think reasonable amounts are: \$50 per year for dues, national and local; \$100 to \$300 for insurance (we'll be lucky if we get it at any price and it's valid); and \$1 per one way mile for the excursion with \$25 to \$35 minimum. The costs are there because of the dangers present on the railroad. The railroads are in business to make money not to entertain us, and we need to have proper insurance. We need legal "structure" within which we can operate and be secure that we can continue. That "structure" is AARO, NARCOA, and the local groups and that "structure" costs money to set and keep in place. (If you are a diehard type #1 person, no one will stop you from finding and exploiting those "sweetheart" railroads. Do it! I still use them when I can. But I prefer to grow and try new rails. So that's why I converted to type #2.)

A lot of you know, I compare our hobby to skydiving. Skydivers rent the plane, landing zone, and chute. They must sign releases to protect the owners of the land and equipment. They must have insurance. They must follow

(Continued on next page)

From the President:

(Continued from previous page)

rules. They are watched by the FAA. They have a set of groups, a "structure." They argue about rules, insurance, territory, and personalities. Sound familiar? They do have their act together and are secure in their hobby.

There are other parallels. Ever hear of "bootlegging" in the skydiving world? It happens. One of the favorites is to jump off a building, with a large risk of death, and it's also illegal. But a lot of people feel skydiving costs too much, so they try all kinds of other ways to experience the hobby. We will have those also—forever. We must make this a small minority and show the railroads, insurance industry and FRA we do not approve. I hope all of you will want to do this correctly, and establish working relationships with those involved. Relationships that endure the years as we enjoy our excursions.

Now for some bad news: AARO's present carrier will not renew. There's a possibility that we could get a similar policy but not as cheaply. What does the future hold? I don't know, I've never been good at this. But without third party liability insurance, motorcar excursions out west are pretty much gone.

Here's some possibilities for what may happen: we reduce to a bunch of warring "tribes"—the tower of Babel incarnate. Each little group will have some kind of "policy" and the thing will be about as trustworthy as the person taking the money for it, just like the old days. If the policy proves no good, that person will be hit, or if that person has nothing in the way of assets, he'll slip away. The lawyers will go after whatever assets they can find: yours and the railroad's. Anyone can buy insurance, the trick is to buy a valid policy; to be certain there'll be a payment if there's a claim. All the policies are "boilerplate," and seeing them doesn't really matter; it's the associated paperwork that ties down the insurance company. You know the insurance company is not going to be anyone's friend if there's a big claim involved. So I doubt if most groups will end up with a truly valid policy. A lot of you won't care, but some have assets and family. Those need protection.

We could go after the people that complained. They suffered no financial loss, we did. AARO could get restraining orders, requiring

them to leave us and our carrier alone. This is like plugging a very leaky boat with water soluble paste. It would be a neverending task. These people don't seem to have a life, and enjoy infinite amounts of free time. Who of you will work with the lawyers on this?

We could get a not-so-good policy. How about one that covers only the railroads, but not you, the motorcar operator? Want the risk? There is one like that. How about with a non-admitted company? We'll never get on a major railroad with something from such a company. (Do you know what non-admitted means? Call your agent and ask!)

We could find a new policy, try to protect it and tighten up our act. This is what I hope we'll do. We'll have to make AARO membership more restrictive. We'll have to tie it in with membership in NARCOA, and better inform members of their "golden egg," and how it is ALL our responsibility to protect it. If we don't pull together, we all lose.

So this is some of the background as we go into the Chicago meeting in February. We will probably be able to come up with some type of policy. But we will have to tie the users of this policy together better: minimum rules of operation and safety, plus better communication to the members as to what the policy can and cannot do.

I hope now you realize some of the problems we face. To me the motorcars I own are pretty much worthless if I can't operate them on track. I'm hoping we can work out a stable environment for that operation. To do that we need stable insurance, and a stable organization. If you have concerns, please voice them to your representative.

Until next time, happy motoring!

**DEADLINE FOR
SUBMISSION OF
ARTICLES, PHOTOS,
ETC., FOR NEXT ISSUE
OF THE SETOFF IS
MARCH 15TH**

WRAY-ZOR SHARP TIMING WAS THE ORDER OF THE DAY AT AUGUST "ALMOST HEAVEN" MEET IN WEST VIRGINIA

By Rose Hines

With a flip of the wrist or a turn of a key, the snap, crackle and pop of 70+ motorcars inched their way along the rails into the fog-covered West Virginia morning . . . bound for Petersburg as we departed Moorefield at approximately 8:00 a.m. What a sight it was!

We'd procrastinated for several years about attending this particular meet and it just didn't happen . . . until now. Thanks to Wray Dudley's computerized auto-map, we were due east from Indianapolis.

The following morning, August 20th, brought a smooth 6:30 a.m. set-on for a sea of motorcars. Seeing old friends and meeting new ones is always an exciting part of any motorcar meet. When all cars were set-on, the bull horn pierced the misty fog to assemble the drivers meeting and silence the engines.

Wray Dudley welcomed us, introduced the South Branch Valley Railroad men in charge and then

instructed and advised us as to safety rules and crossing situations to be aware of. Coupled with a wealth of information from the railroad and Wray's time and effort, participants were recipients of a bounty of detailed and professional looking materials to enhance this run. The brochure-sized "Special Timetable and Itinerary" was especially impressive, not to mention the neat little

commemorative engraved plate!

Among Wray's closing statements, he light-heartedly commented that "optimistically, we should be back by 7:00 p.m." Due to the large number of motorcars participating, a general murmur of disbelief filtered through the crowd . . .

Thus, we rolled out of Moorefield, bound for Petersburg at 8:00 a.m. It was a good run. We were able to use the wye in Petersburg, which was nice. The major high traffic crossings were flagged for all and we arrived back at Moorefield primed and ready for more. At Moorefield, a few more motorcars joined us as we proceeded north to "the trough." Again, everyone was pleased by the general ease of so many motorcars' progress. Few problem stops and all tend to heed and comprehend the importance of minimal downtime. Tow bars and/or assistance appeared rapidly when the need arose.

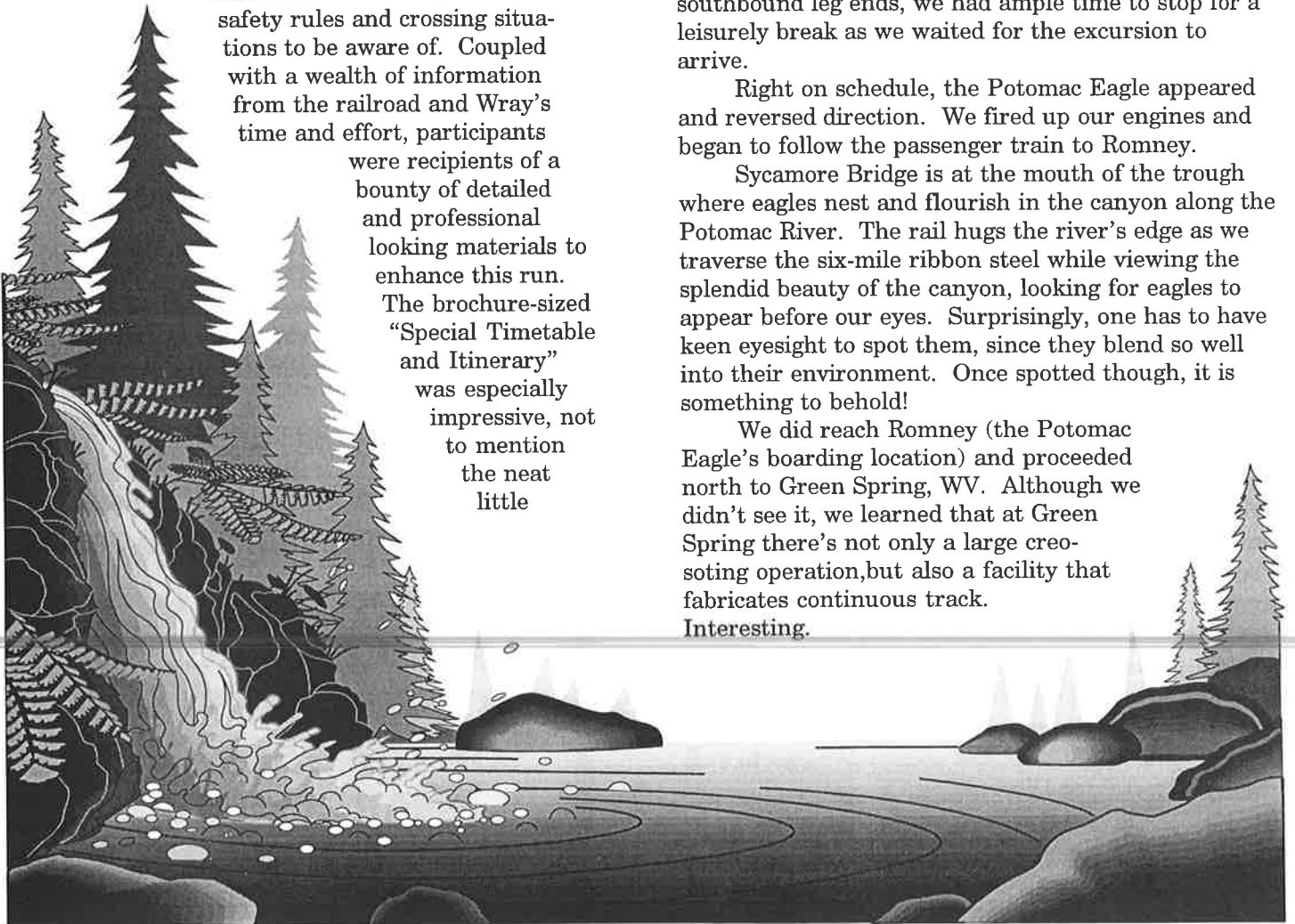
Our main focus was to not interfere with the Potomac Eagle passenger excursion schedule. Upon reaching Sycamore Bridge, where the Potomac Eagle's southbound leg ends, we had ample time to stop for a leisurely break as we waited for the excursion to arrive.

Right on schedule, the Potomac Eagle appeared and reversed direction. We fired up our engines and began to follow the passenger train to Romney.

Sycamore Bridge is at the mouth of the trough where eagles nest and flourish in the canyon along the Potomac River. The rail hugs the river's edge as we traverse the six-mile ribbon steel while viewing the splendid beauty of the canyon, looking for eagles to appear before our eyes. Surprisingly, one has to have keen eyesight to spot them, since they blend so well into their environment. Once spotted though, it is something to behold!

We did reach Romney (the Potomac Eagle's boarding location) and proceeded north to Green Spring, WV. Although we didn't see it, we learned that at Green Spring there's not only a large creosoting operation, but also a facility that fabricates continuous track.

Interesting.



After manually turning at Green Spring, we made our southbound trek back towards Moorefield, once again adjusting our schedule to the Potomac Eagle excursion. The day was amazingly well scheduled for everyone, with little or no delay.

About 50 feet from our final destination and set-off point at Moorefield, I glanced at my watch: 6:59 p.m. Wray Dudley had formulated a perfect, razor-sharp, almost heaven schedule!

Thanks to Wray for this excellent, well-orchestrated meet. A great time and a rail-y good show!

With our hats still off in recognition and thanks, gratitude and appreciation are also given to the watchful eye, help and approvals of the South Branch Valley Railroad. Last, but by no means least, our thanks to Walter Mattuch. Imagine the confusion of coordinating 70+ set-offs to their vehicle/trailer in very limited space! Well, without the direction of Walt we'd most likely still be there. Thanks to everyone who was instrumental in making this meet play like a song!

Want Ads

EDITOR'S NOTE; THE SETOFF is happy to print all ads received from the membership. Please send ads directly to: Gene Tucker, SETOFF Editor, 1004 North Kentucky Street, Arlington, VA 22205-2310. Thank you!

FOR SALE: Fairmont M14, good belt, wheels, brakes, roof and front, \$395.00. Contact: Tom and Debi Kowalski, 689 Podunk Road, East Brookfield, MA 01515-0135. Phone: (508) 867-2188

FOR SALE: Motorcars from western railroads, \$1,500.00 to \$3,500.00. Also, real cabooses and passenger cars delivered and set-up: \$10.00 for specs, price sheet and photos. Cabeese 744, P.O. Box 2019, Fairfield, IA 52556. Serious? (515) 472-2020.

FOR SALE: Kalamazoo 23-B, 2-cylinder Hercules NXB, ex-Reading car. Contact: Joe Shaffer, 35166 Jason Drive, North Ridgeville, OH 44039. Phone: (216) 353-0764.

FOR SALE: Northwestern 539R, 8.25 HP Briggs & Stratton engine with electric start. Contact: Jeff Levengood, 2189 Oak Tree Drive, Dover, OH 44622. Phone: (216) 343-3407.

WANTED: Fairmont adjustable windshield, part #59258 for M9. Contact: Jeff Levengood (see ad above).

TRADE: Fairmont portable turntable for 20-inch wheels. Contact: Tom Diehl, 101 South Main Street, Navarre, OH 44662. Phone: (216) 879-5669.

WANTED: Fairmont operating and parts manuals for 1929 M19 or MM19, serial # MM19-130825. Other parts needed for the Fairmont: good 17-inch rims with or without the wheels, two #M6505 roller bearing castings, one F3000 3 X 62 cord belt, wheel guards or fenders, instruction plate, lever guide or anything else for this project. Write or call: Vic Cross, 3282 Old Quarry Road, Wever, IA 52658-9513. Phone: (319) 528-4369.

FOR SALE: Motorcars, various makes and models. Send LSASE for current list. Southeastern Rail Services, 510 Austin Street, Norfolk, VA 23503.

FOR SALE: Pumpcar plans to build a replica Sheffield two- to four-man pumpcar are again available. \$60.00 postpaid. IS THERE ANY INTEREST IN VELOCIPEDE PLANS? Bruce Carpenter, Carpenter Rail Design, 10241 Co. Rd. 25A, Wapakoneta, OH 45895. Phone: (419) 738-5384.

FOR SALE: Ex-Soo Line RR, Fairmont M19 with cab. Runs good, strong engine. New wheels. \$1,100.00. Call or write for photos. Also, Leslie three-chime air horn for sale and other motorcar parts. Contact: Franz VonRiedel, 5852 North Shore Drive, Duluth, MN 55804. Phone: (218) 525-4088.

NARCOA'S NEXT BOARD MEETING IS PLANNED FOR FEBRUARY 25, 1995

NARCOA's next Board meeting is scheduled for Saturday, February 25th, at the O'Hare Days Inn on Manheim Road in Chicago. There will be a social gathering on Friday evening, the 24th, beginning about 6 p.m. The Board meeting will begin at 8 a.m. the following morning.

NARCOA's general membership is invited and encouraged to attend.

If you want more information or desire an agenda for the meeting, contact Hank Brown, the meeting's organizer, at 622 Oak Street, Cottage Grove, WI 53527, (608) 839-4939. You can also get in touch with Joel Williams, NARCOA secretary at Box 82, Greendell, NJ 07839, or Ron Zammit, NARCOA president, 469 Compana, Arroyo Grande, CA 93420.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

This is a request for groups advertising a meet to add the mileage to the notice.

I recently received a meet announcement with no track length mentioned, plus a letter from a member on the same day with the same request. He, like others, bases his decision to attend partly on the ratio of highway miles driven to rail miles ridden. A quick survey of recent *SETOFF* ads revealed that half had no mileage specified.

Please announce the length of the proposed trip in a format that provides the needed information. John Nolan once asked who would like to do a 20-mile trip on his railroad. As we crowded around to get on the list, he added, "It's ten round trips on my one mile of track."

Dick Ray
Randolph, NJ

Editor:

After reading the last two issues of *THE SETOFF* regarding safety, I feel obliged to add more fuel to the fire.

1. I have a problem with people who write rules yet ignore the same. The example I noticed was related to footwear. If I as a director of an organization require "work shoes" on speeder rides, then if I don't have proper footwear I should not ride. Despite who I am. If rules are

ignored by those who write them, then all rules are weakened. This will cause some to violate rules that are critical to our safe operation, through the logic that so-and-so writes them and he can ignore them. Therefore, so can I.

2. I know of no railroad that allows hyrailers or speeders to be shunted to allow the activation of track circuits. I have been on only one ride where our escort activated crossing signals and this was done at a single crossing and done manually at the control cabinet. If the railroad wants their signals activated, **LET THEM DO IT THEMSELVES!** We are there at their discretion.

3. The least spoken and most overlooked part of safety is common sense. We all know we need to use it, but we sometimes forget in our rush to create rules for unique situations. Two common sense statements I strictly follow are, "I can be right and simultaneously I can be DEAD RIGHT," and "yield to anything larger than yourself." Both were printed on a billboard at the entrance to a private road logging operation. Both contributed to a greatly reduced accident rate on the roads.

4. Be judicious in whom you invite to join this hobby. Think to yourself, "Would I want this person following me in my speeder?" I realize this is elitism in the extreme, but I feel it is necessary to protect the integrity of our hobby.

I'll climb off my soapbox now and say thanks for hearing me out.

Steve Healy
Tacoma, WA

NOMINATIONS NOW BEING SOUGHT FOR 1996 AREA REPS

By Michael Mitzel

The Election Committee of the NARCOA Board of Directors announces that it is taking nominations for election of area representatives for even-numbered regions, regions 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10.

The current term for these areas is due to expire at the end of 1995. The new term will be for three years beginning in 1996.

Listed below are the guidelines for nominations of area representatives:

1. No self nominations.

2. Nominate only individuals in your own area.

3. Contact the person first and receive an okay before you nominate him/her.

4. Be sure the person you are nominating is going to be able to handle the job, which will require a large commitment of time.

5. Mail all nominations to:

Carl Anderson
1330 Rosedale Lane
Hoffman Estates, IL 60195

All nominations must be received by March 30, 1995.

Sixth Annual "Almost Heaven" August Meet Attracts Over 70 Motorcars to West Virginia

(Continued from page 1)

all, about 50 cars were on the tracks Friday night.

I would say bright and early, however bright would be later on in the day. It was early, 7:00 a.m. and Ed Taylor and I started our inspections of the cars. Once the inspections were done and all "early cars" were on the track, Wray Dudley and Terry Gaynor, the Superintendent of the South Branch Valley Railroad, mounted the platform of the SBV RR's caboose. Terry gave us a welcome aboard address and cautioned us about several grade crossings. Then Wray gave the safety brief and called on meet coordinators of upcoming meets to tell the group about their planned events. There were at least a half dozen meets in the works that were announced!

About 15 minutes behind schedule, 50-plus motorcars backed out of the siding and, once clear of the switch, it was off to Petersburg.

The early morning fog would have made road crossings especially hazardous except for the grade crossing protection handled by John Cease, Chuck McIntyre, Scott Shady, Matt Robinson and a few others. At the major crossings, there they were. Thanks guys, GREAT JOB.

Our schedule for the entire day would require us to maximize our running time. The five-minute rule applied for breakdowns, but really no one had to use it. The cars ran extremely well for a trip of this length. Several of the MT19s suffered carburetor icing ills in the high humidity and one ST-2AA broke the drive belt, just at Moorefield. Thanks Randall, for the tow.

We made the wye at Petersburg, stopped for the cars to bunch up again (and a few quick repairs), then headed back to Moorefield where the remainder of our group was waiting for us to clear the switch. Once clear (and now on schedule), the later group of cars joined us for a total of 66 motorcars. We needed to be at the Sycamore Bridge at 11:30 a.m. to meet the Potomac Eagle excursion train. We arrived, broke out lunch and 20 minutes later we heard the air chime on the borrowed CSX "F" unit. Several of the motorcars in our group had air chimes on their cars and saluted the arrival of the Potomac Eagle.

The "Eagle" reversed direction, and we followed it to the Romney Station. We allowed ourselves a short convenience stop while some in our crowd took time to perform minor repairs. Once refreshed, it was off to Green Spring for our turn-around.

This railroad is noted for the bald eagles nesting along a portion of the line in what is referred to as "The Trough". The railroad is on a ledge above the

river and mountains form high walls on both sides. On the southbound leg of the trip, several eagles were spotted by many of the motorcar riders, adding to the spectacular scenery. Rock walls, rock houses, pastures and farms with the frequent camp sites were all along this route.

Our next stop would be Green Spring, where we would turn the cars for the southbound run. All during the day, railroad radios were used for communication between the lead, middle and rear cars. Several HAM radio operators used their radios to provide additional coordination. This communication enabled us to keep our tight schedule. Our running on the SBV was based on not interfering with the schedule of the Potomac Eagle. The southbound meet at Romney would be our last critical time window. From Romney to Moorefield, we would be "on our own".

A gravel road at Green Spring was the designated turning spot, and then we were on the main back at Romney—well ahead of the northbound Eagle. The air chimes signalled the arrival of the train, so we cranked our motorcars and, when clear, headed towards Moorefield.

We arrived back in Moorefield about 5:30 p.m. Everybody set about to get their cars loaded onto their trailers and off to a cool shower and good eats. Ed McNulty was the last to get his A-4 loaded, about 9:00 pm. Much better than previous years when 11:30 was the norm. This time I suppose we had other good reasons, as two different trips would run on Sunday.

Our sincerest thanks go to Terry Gaynor, Superintendent of the South Branch Valley and to Kenneth Thorne, Trainmaster. Ken had ridden the lead car all day, and kept us on time. Thanks Guys, we enjoyed this ride.

Thanks are due to the rest of the SBV organization, for they too made this event happen. We appreciate Dave Corbitt and Dick Nobel, owners of the Potomac Eagle, for giving us this opportunity to share the railroad with their excursion train.

In a conversation on the following Monday morning, the SBV Railroad was opening the door for events in 1995. Yes, EVENTS. Maybe two weekends, one in the Spring and one in the Fall. Maybe some nighttime riding or at least some additional mileage.

By the way folks, the railroad was VERY PLEASED, to say the least, with our overall conduct, degree of cooperation with the railroad and the way this event transpired. This is the way motorcar events should take place. Thanks to all of those that rode this year, it was ALMOST HEAVEN.

A "Roller Coaster" Ride on WV Northern RR

By Hugh Cain

For those of you who failed to go to Kingwood, WV, for the first motorcar meet, YOU missed a spectacular ride.

Jim Arnold has just reopened the idle West Virginia Northern Railroad and invited those of us brave enough to try to tame his railroad's grades and curves to come over. What was thought to be just a few cars turned out to be 25 assorted motorcars and one hyrailer. As it turned out, 25 cars is just about the right size for a motorcar group on this railroad.

This railroad is definitely NOT the place for "fixer-upper" cars or those that just don't have the horsepower. With 4.77% grades (in the mid-3% for most of the line), switchbacks and curves throughout the 10-plus miles of the line, this railroad is a tough challenge for even the best OD-Bs and RO-Cs. About the only smaller motorcar not having excessive belt problems was Ed Taylor and his M9. S-2's, MT19's and the larger cars were better able to run this line simply due to their increased horsepower, not so much belt drive vs. chain drive or driveshaft.

Our departure time was delayed at least three times, but finally Jim had us meet in the excursion train coach for a welcome aboard and safety briefing. Jim stressed a very slow speed, which we were very willing to oblige with once we saw the railroad. The major grade crossings would be flagged for us by some of the WVN volunteers; we would have to do the farm crossings.

Railroad releases signed and buckets of sand on the motorcar—yes SAND, for good reason—off we went.

My MT19 had suffered fuel related problems on the SBV, so I would ride with Jim on the lead motorcar, a WVN A-6, equipped with sanders.

On the first of the grades, Jim sanded the rails for the following cars. We found out that the constant light rain was washing the sand off the rails, so we saved our remaining supply for the steeper grades.

Our group took the siding at MP-5, Borgman, to allow the excursion train to pass. Now the locomotive was sanding the rails as it went up and down the hills. Up and down is right. Have you ever ridden your motorcar on a roller coaster? That is what it seems like to ride this railroad. I asked Jim if the railroad had a nickname and if not why not "The Roller Coaster Line".

On the way back from Tunnelton, Bob Leone, of American Altavista, was invited aboard the lead car, to get some additional footage for an upcoming production of the Kingwood Northern and South Branch Valley motorcar meets.

At Kingwood, Jim, Wray, Dick and Walter were discussing the possibilities of future motorcar runs on this very scenic line.

This Kingwood Northern is a MUST to ride. You've got to try it at least once.

Thanks to Jim Arnold, his wife, and the entire staff at the West Virginia Northern for a very enjoyable, but wet, event. We'll be back.

THE SETOFF

Box 82, Greendell, NJ 07839

POSTMASTER: IF UNDELIVERABLE, PLEASE RETURN TO SENDER.