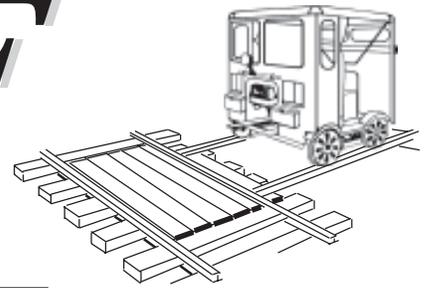


The **SETOFF**



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

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May/June 2007, Volume 21 - No. 3

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Heart of Georgia Excursion  
Photo by Helen Ray

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Please submit materials  
for the May/June issue of  
**The SETOFF**

by June 15  
as follows:

Letters to the Editor  
All other materials  
Photos

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Visit NARCOA's Website at:  
<http://www.narcoa.org>

## **President's Message**

by C. Patrick Coleman

I started to say welcome to spring, then I turned on the weather and see snow is still falling in many parts of the United States. Last week in Seattle a lady told me winter is not over until snow falls on the daffodils three times. Take heart; spring will be here soon, and a full slate of runs are planned for us all over the U.S. and Canada.



Our friend and a major supporter of our hobby, Les King, is reported to be doing well in his recovery from surgery. You will be seeing this article several weeks after it was written, and I sincerely hope we hear only continuing good news regarding Les's recovery. To both Les and Cindy I wish to thank you for time, energy and support provided to the hobby for many years.

I sense confusion about what Excursion Coordinators do and who they should be. An Excursion Coordinator (EC) is an experienced competent operator that has demonstrated the operational and organizational skills necessary to not only secure runs,

but to properly lead a group of people from set-on to setoff. It should also be recognized that the EC is willing take the responsibility to see that operators and their motorcars meet or exceed NARCOA rules and policies. In that respect NARCOA rules provide the EC with the authority to say an operator or motorcar is unsafe, and to advise that person(s) that they may not start or possibly continue a run based upon their condition or their motorcar's condition. An EC is not just a person that has political or railroad connections. We value those persons contacts and abilities to assist affiliates to host runs, but an experienced person will be the EC and the person with the "connection" can be a valued assistant and possibly in training to be an EC. NARCOA now has a mentoring program for qualified persons to become ECs. It is the responsibility of affiliate's officers to make sure a person is qualified to lead as an EC prior to their being allowed to do so. Finally, it is imperative that an EC or his assistants will be NARCOA members in good standing, with a current rulebook exam and current insurance.

EC's need to be aware that it is their responsibility to report any and all incidents involving bodily injury or property damage during a NARCOA insured run to Tom Norman immediately. Forms and guidance are available on the NARCOA web site at <http://www.narcoa.org/docs.htm>. Failure to report as required has potential penalties for the EC and the hosting affiliate. The need to do so is not arbitrary direction on part of the NARCOA Board, but procedure mandated by our insurance carriers. It is done for all of our protection.

Elections for Area Directors, in even numbered areas, are in this issue. Please vote, and think of participating in some form with your local affiliate or assisting your Area Director.

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for September 28 & 29, 2007 at The Sheraton Gateway Suites Hotel - 6501 Mannheim Road - Rosemont, IL 60018 at Chicago's O'Hare Airport. All members are invited to attend. The meetings are held between 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. both days. Please contact your Area Director if you are coming so we can have an appropriate amount of space for all attendees.

Best regards and safe running.

Here is a poem I wrote while on an excursion from Llano, TX, March 17, 2007. I've included a picture of some of the cars setting on for the run.

*Speedin'*  
by Jonna Beck

I've written of bronc bustin', 'bout love, 'bout despair,  
but nothin's as nice as the light breeze in my hair  
whilst I'm riding along in an old ST-2K  
on the rails out of Llano on a nice Springtime day.

Lots of folks come along for the clackety ride.  
They bring their kids, and their friends are right at their side.  
Keepin' the trains' tracks in use is our goal.  
With our motorcars, we're all on a roll.

These cars used to be used to make work on the tracks.  
Now they carry us hobbyists to the ends and back.  
While we ride, we see eagles and cactus galore.  
The energy and thrill of the mechanics don't bore.

If you're lookin' around for somethin' to do,  
grab up a speeder, and you'll be jazzed, too.



Photo by Susan Wright.

**Submitting Materials  
for Publication**

- 1 Materials received by the 15th of February, April, June, August, October or December will appear in the following two-month issue, subject to editing for space. Include e-mail address or phone number.
- 2 Submit hard copy, photos or .jpeg images, clearly labeled as to subject and photographer.
- 3 Electronic submissions are preferred for text.
- 4 We cannot reprint copyrighted material without authorization. Include permission to reprint with all copyrighted materials.
- 5 Originals are archived, not returned.
- 6 Letters to the Editor must be signed and include email address or phone number for authentication. "Name withheld upon request" may be substituted when the letter is published. All such letters will be printed as discussed in the NARCOA policy book.

The *SETOFF*

Volume 21 Number 3

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## Letters To The Editor



If you have a comment, suggestion, or complaint, send it to me at:

setoff@juno.com

Please put **LETTERS** in the subject line.

**NOTE:** Any views expressed or implied in this column are not those of the editor.

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**REMINDER:** To submit photos and articles electronically, please reduce the size to no larger than 600 KB. (I still have dial-up Internet service.) DSL is coming closer, but none too fast!

**ALTERNATIVE:** Burn a CD and snail-mail to:

Charlene Morvay  
17825 Route 8  
Union City, PA 16438

# K

## Bless Les

by Anonymous

It doesn't matter who wrote this; anyone of us could have. Les King suddenly closed the doors of his one-stop motorcar parts business, due to serious health issues. He was scheduled for surgery, and news as to his condition was not available as of this writing.

I've only been in the hobby for a couple of years, but made the "pilgrimage" to Lawrence, Ohio, several times to pick up and drop off motorcars and parts, it being about a days drive from where I live. I really enjoyed meeting and talking with Les, and loved hearing his comments and stories about all his adventures with motorcars, from buying at auctions in lots of 40, to seeing gleaming new cars under construction on his shop floor.

He got out of building cars last year, partly because his wife Cindy wanted him to spend more time with her. Les King Motor Cars was always a family business. I have two pairs of flags which Cindy sewed, with white reflective stripes on them. She helped with the custom seats with pictures of various motorcars sewed on them. Their son did the decals with the logos of many railroads, current and fallen flags.

The reality is that this hobby would have been way less welcoming, to the new member especially, if the treasure trove of motorcar parts which Les offered were not available from his easy-to-use one-stop website (thanks to Keith Mackey!). And reportedly most of the parts will be available again from other sources, which will be announced soon on [www.leskingmotorcars.com](http://www.leskingmotorcars.com). (The two-cycle parts can now be gotten from Dean Mark at [fredshops@earthlink.net](mailto:fredshops@earthlink.net)).

Please send cards and notes of appreciation to Les King at 1835 Alabama Avenue, N.W., North Lawrence, Ohio 44666. Prayers you don't have to mail. **THANK YOU, LES!!**

Update: "Les had a very successful operation . . . he is in good spirits and resting comfortably." Posted on his website 3/31/07.



## From The Director's Desk Area 4 (KY, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)

by Tom Falicon  
Area 4 Director

The 2007 motorcar excursion season is in full swing, and I bet you're all out there rolling along the rails!

I have two topics that may be of interest to you this month. The first topic is in praise of our NARCOA Excursion Coordinators, and our second item is a safety topic.

Being a NARCOA Certified Excursion Coordinator (EC) is sometimes a thankless job. Many of our dedicated NARCOA members spend countless hours performing the jobs of EC and Assistant EC at NARCOA excursions all over the country. The words "it's like trying to herd cats," and "excursion days are my favorite days, but I can't wait for them to be over," are spoken more than once during many EC's hectic excursion weekends. But a dedicated EC wouldn't trade his job for the world. Before an excursion can take place, EC's have spent numerous hours talking with the hosting railroads working out details to boost the RR's confidence in hosting a NARCOA motorcar event. I bet every NARCOA EC has at least one good story about the work it took, and how everything came together to secure a hosting railroad for an event.

The EC is like a juggler; he has the daunting task of balancing hosting railroad requirements, NARCOA rules, and excursion attendee's needs, and combining them into a safe, smooth running, and fun event. Potential problems must be thought through and solved way before they may happen. Sometimes an event can be made safer, or be made to run more smoothly, by the EC enacting some of his own or the hosting railroad's rules. These rules are usually met with little to no resistance from excursion attendees, because they realize that without them the EC may not have been able to secure the hosting RR for an event.

Of course there are a select few that feel the EC is on a "power trip," and he is enacting these rules for no other reason than that the "power" has gone to his head. This is so far from the truth that it is just plain stupid. If an EC or a hosting RR sees the need for a rule that's in addition to NARCOA requirements, then so be it. That's the price we pay for a nice

ride, and if a member feels it's out of line, he has the ultimate choice to not attend that event. I could go on for hours about the unbelievable job our EC's do in securing and



running motorcar excursions. So the next time you're at an event, take a few minutes to let your hosting EC know that you understand what it took for him to bring that excursion together and thank him for his efforts!

My second topic is about safety. On a working railroad, before the days work is started, a group leader holds what is called a *job briefing*. This job briefing can be compared to the safety meeting that we hold before each day's running at our excursions. Before a motorcar starts its excursion day, its operator should gather all the people that will be riding in the car that day for a "mini-job briefing". During this meeting each rider should be familiarized with the location of the fire extinguisher, first aid kit, flashlight, flags, radio, turntable alarm system, and any other equipment in the car that is pertinent to the days running. The operator should then go on to instruct each rider how to stop the vehicle via its braking system, how to put the transmission in neutral and how to kill the engine. The final step should be to show the riders proper flagging techniques, and also discuss what they should do if the vehicle is disabled in a blind curve. It may never happen, but just think of how much easier and safer it will be for your riders to help out in the event that you, the operator, have been incapacitated due to an incident. When you stop and think about it, there should be no reason not to take a few minutes to hold a little safety meeting for your car before each days running,

I'm sure I speak for all Area 4 members in wishing Les King a speedy recovery. When Les is fully recovered, we hope that Les and Cindy take their new found freedom and use it to pursue any dreams they may have!

Also enclosed in this issue of *The SETOFF* is your ballot to vote for your Area 4 rep. Please show your support for Area 4 and mail your ballot in today. Thanks!



## ***From The Director's Desk***

### **Area 8 (Canada, Australia, Germany, Norway, the UK)**

by Ken Annett

Greetings, Area 8 Members.

Since this is the issue of *The SETOFF* that has the election ballots, I thought that I should explain that I have asked to have my name removed this time.

While I have served for four terms and learned so much about the policies and inner workings of the club, I believe that it is appropriate to step down. An organization such as ours can only thrive if new people become involved and bring new ideas and opinions to the Board and, to that end, I encourage other long term Board members to follow my example for the good of the club.

I am pleased that Dr. Warren Froese of Winnipeg, MB has agreed to accept a nomination for the election of a new area 8 Director. I would like to thank the members of all the areas, plus those on the Board, who have put in so many long hours over the years to make this association and our great hobby what it is today.

I hope to see you all on the rails some day.



*The Oil Creek & Titusville Eagle. Photo by Charlie Morvay*

## **The Safety Comment: Safety, Safety and More Safety**

by Bob Knight, Chairman, NARCOA Safety Committee

SAFETY, SAFETY, SAFETY. It's in the news whether it's on the TV, websites, newspapers or magazine publications.

While surfing the many railroad websites, I came across a great CSX public safety quote that fits this Safety Comment very well. It's from their current company website: "CSXT works year around to improve grade crossings, as every two hours, a train vs. vehicle collision occurs somewhere in the United States. In 2002, CSXT launched a system-wide program to clear-cut trees and vegetation at grade crossings equipped with 'passive' warning signs (i.e., cross bucks) to give motorists a better view as they approach tracks."

While pondering the above statements this brings to mind two very important motorcar thoughts. The first is the startling statistic; "every two hours a train vs. vehicle collision occurs. Yes, we know trains are running seven days a week, 24 hours a day on the major railways. BUT, in our hobby, is the crossing exposure proportional?

I have been on a one-day excursion where there were 114 crossings going and returning. That is 228 crossing multiplied by the 36 cars on the run gives a potential of 8,208 crossing exposures where an incident could occur! Now you factor in poor weather like rain, fog, or even bright sunlight (glare) on the run, and you raise the potential of an incident even more.

The second factor related to the above CSX comment concerns sight lines at the crossings. As we tend to run on lesser-used rail, the intersections and crossings are usually not clear cut. I have been on many runs where the weeds are higher than my motorcar and the weeds or brush run right up to the road crossing making no real sight line until you are



entering the crossing. Many times the locomotive engineer is high enough to see over the weeds and brush but we sit much lower in our motorcars and don't have the same, better view.

With the busy motorcar season beginning to escalate, please keep these thoughts in mind at all times during the excursions you are enjoying. Remember to be very cautious and vigilant at all crossings, and consider stopping and looking both ways before proceeding. If you have a passenger riding with you, enlist their help to assist you at all crossings by helping to observe and be proactive.

I close this Safety Comment with another great quote from the same CSX website: "Not only is it the right thing to do, but when a company puts safety first, everyone benefits: The employees and their families, the customer and the communities served." They are so right that everyone wins when SAFETY is FIRST!!!

Please keep it safe on the rails this season.





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## ***Three Rivers, Four Diamonds, and a President***

by Helen and Dick Ray

This spring a few Yankees ventured down to the Heart of Georgia Railroad to sample the legendary southern hospitality, southern cooking, and of course the warm climate. We were tired of winter!

Helen and I, John Kemmet and Sharon Smith, Bob Hixenbaugh, and Alice and Bruce Tracy were the Yankee bunch. Illness prevented Betty and Denny Kovarik from their planned attendance.

We arrived on Friday afternoon and were able to set on with no rush. The set-on spot was one of the best I have ever seen, and the trailer parking could not have been better. We hung around for several hours, visiting with people we had not seen for a while and meeting new people. It was good to finally meet many people who I know from correspondence, and a number of the “local” operators. In addition to the elaborate information package supplied by Bobby and Brenda, the town supplied a “goody bag” with additional useful items. This was yet another example of the hospitality by the town.

Other people set-on early Saturday morning and all were ready for the 7:30 a.m. scheduled Safety Meeting, which actually took place on time. The pilot from the railroad reminded us that any workday or operation has to start with a briefing and he showed us the written track occupancy permit. Doing everything by the book was the practice all weekend. Bobby’s briefing ahead of time was concise and informative. He gave credit to the safety and group leaders, and the registration people for a safe and successful trip.



*Ready for Safety Meeting*

Can you imagine a whole town closing down for a NARCOA meet? It happened in Pitts, Georgia. A banner greeted us as we set-on. We were advised that the town would host a festival complete with vendors, open stores, tee shirts celebrating the run, food and a street dance. The Pitts Downtown Development Authority, under the direction of Director Delano Briziel, hosted this Pitts third annual festival.

Bobby Moreman described how they set a schedule in the past. They carefully calculated a reasonable schedule based on a low speed, the number of grade crossings, and the comfort stops. Then they doubled it! We managed to stay reasonably close to the plan all weekend.

The railroad started out as the Montgomery, Americus, and Savannah Railroad (SAM). The line, from Savannah, Georgia, through Americus and Albany to Montgomery, Alabama, ran from 1888 to 1895, when it was sold at foreclosure. It and two other lines merged in 1967 and became the Seaboard Airline Railroad. Then it became part of the Seaboard Coast Line system. Next it became part of CSX, and then it went to Railtex, later RailAmerica. It was finally purchased by the State of Georgia in 1999, which found an operator under the Heart of Georgia name, rehabbed the line and started excursion service from Cordele to Plains. The full history is even more complicated, so this just an overview.

On Saturday we headed east through Rochelle, Abbeyville, Milan, Helena, and Alamo (where we turned). A comfort stop was planned at Milan, but the local person assigned to open the building failed to do it. Despite heroic efforts by Bobby to find a key, we never got it opened. So we went on to Alamo, turned, and descended on two places in town. One was an ice cream and sub shop and the other, which we chose, was a buffet. Judy Fossett of the county Chamber of Commerce arranged our reception in Alamo.

*continued on next page . . .*



*Arriving in Milan*

I only recognized two things at the buffet, the rice and the fried chicken. A local guy was behind me in line so he provided information on the offerings. Needless to say I tried all of them. Our cooler full of snacks went untouched.

I saw the cars ahead of me actually slowing down for switches, as required by the NARCOA rules. I have never seen this before! Due to the roller coaster profile of the line I was able to see six to eight cars ahead at times, all evenly spaced at suitable intervals.

The entire operation was as smooth, well organized, and as safe as I have ever seen.

A unique situation occurred at one grade crossing. The flaggers had the traffic stopped and the motorcars were crossing when an ambulance appeared with all flashers going. Helen knew to halt the motorcars and let the vehicle through, and directed the other flagger



*A well-designed turntable for turning an A5*

to do the same. Anyone flagging should know the procedure for this situation, in our opinion.

All along the track the wisteria was in full bloom, as were the azaleas, dogwood, redbud, apple blossoms and other flowers. The pecan trees were getting their leaves in the huge orchards west of Pitts. We got pictures of the cypress trees in the swamp.

When we returned from a great run on Saturday through the incredible Georgia countryside the festival was in full swing. The townspeople were lined up along the track to welcome us! We felt so special!! We had never tasted hot boiled peanuts until a vendor offered us a sample. Dick had one peanut and Helen ate the rest. They were really good. We left as the band was tuning-up so we cannot comment on the music.



*Alice Tracy at lunch in Alamo*

Our destination for Sunday was the town of Plains. First we stopped at the Cordele station where the tourist train boards passengers and sampled the coffee and other treats offered by the local people. We had to wait for two trains on the CSX tracks to clear the three diamonds before we could leave. We learned later that the second stack train suffered a derailment just past town. If it had happened sooner we would have never completed the trip. Just goes to show that on a railroad nothing is certain.

Last year three alligators were seen in the Flint River west of Cordele, but none were seen this year. My camera was ready just in case!

*continued on next page . . .*

Monica Simmoms of the Crist County (Cordele) Chamber of Commerce arranged for the SAM station in Cordele to be open for us.

After Cordele we passed through the town of Americus and noted uprooted trees and roofs covered with tarps as a result of a tornado on March 2 of this year. Twenty people were killed in several states as a result of the storm, but only two in the Americus area. Among the buildings destroyed were the hospital and the Red Cross headquarters with its emergency generators. We only saw a very small amount of the damage from the tracks. One of the handouts that the town of Pitts provided us was instruction on what to do if a tornado is sighted or reported.

In Plains, we turned in preparation for the return trip. Then we visited the quaint little shops in the area and pigged out on the buffet arranged with the Georgia Welcome Center in Plains, with much thanks to Penny Smith of the center. Once again Helen and I took different things and then split them at the table so we could try everything. The pecan pie was to die for! The station in Plains was the headquarters for Jimmy Carter's campaign and all the stores were loaded with copies of the numerous books written by Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter. Autographed copies were available at extra cost.

We can comment on the weather. What a treat to feel 80-degree temperatures and no humidity when we still have snow on the ground at home. Georgia is a state we will visit again. The people made us feel so welcome! Bobby and Brenda set the stage for the hospitality we experienced. The excursion was by far the best we have ever been on, and you all know how long we have been in this activity. Kudos to Bobby and Brenda, and thanks to all the support crews also because team efforts make things happen!!

P.S.: On the way home we checked into a motel in Staunton, VA, and had to sign away our rights to complain because there was a double track uphill rail line right outside our room. I could not get a reduced rate though. Maybe they saw our railroad vehicle on the trailer.



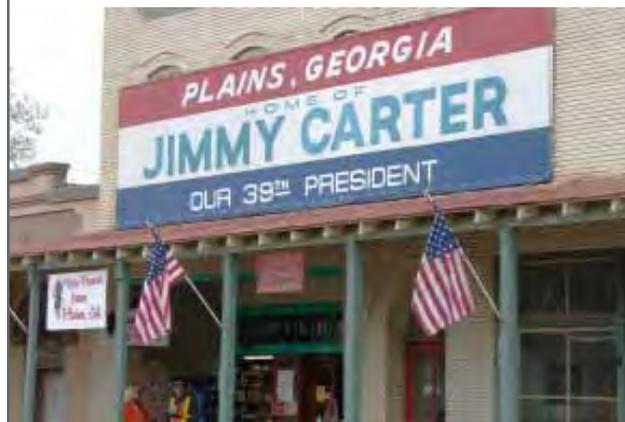
*Nothing like oil smoke in the morning!*



*Two diamonds in Cordele*



*Steve Rinker prepares to push another car, as A.C. Marshall looks on.*



## ***Great Smokey Mountains Railroad December 31, 2006 - January 1, 2007***

by Mark Hudson (all photos by Debbie Hudson)

Another year and another successful excursion on the Great Smokey Mountains Railroad. Tom and Mugz Falicon keep on organizing and operating successful motor car runs on this mountain railroad. Each year we wonder how the weather is going to be. Will it be warm or cold? Will there be snow or sun? This year we didn't have any snow; we had rain. But we also had sun. A combination of weather caused by a cold front combined with moisture from the Gulf of Mexico. I am ahead of myself.

Debbie and I enjoy the GSMR run very much. It's kind of an end-of-year run and a beginning-of-the year run combined into one. We end 2006 and begin 2007. We get to enjoy the motor car hobby with the friends we have made over the three years we've been in the hobby. This would be the third year that we have made the trip as a couple and the fourth year that I have been on the run.

This year I decided to take a couple of days off from work and take Debbie to the Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina. She was very surprised. Not surprised at getting to go to the Biltmore House, but surprised that I was taking her somewhere that was not a motor car excursion. Well, we were going on a motor car excursion, but that was after we traveled to Asheville.

We left on December 28<sup>th</sup> and made the six-hour trip to Asheville. After checking into the motel, we went for the Candlelight Tour of the Biltmore. Forty-three Christmas trees and 43 bathrooms are in the house. The tour is fantastic. The house and grounds are incredible. The story of the Vanderbilt's and how the land was purchased, the house built, and then allowed to be viewed by the public is just incredible.

After the night time tour, we went back the next day to tour the house in the day time. We saw many additional details we had missed the previous evening. We also hiked through the gardens and visited the winery. This place is well worth a visit.

There is a motor car connection here. I did not want to leave the motor car at the motel. We pulled it behind the truck for both tours. During the night tour we were questioned by three or four people. One wanted to know if we were taking it to a "convention". Another wanted to know about the "L&N" on the car. I didn't have any of my information cards about the car or NARCOA; the next day, I took the cards. Not a single person asked about the car! Just my luck!

On Saturday, we took our time driving to Bryson City. Upon checking in at the motel, we visited the area down by the depot. While Debbie went to the shops, I went to the Lionel museum adjacent to the depot. I was really impressed with the display layout and the collection of Lionel O-gauge trains. This is well worth seeing. While downtown, we ran into some motor car friends, Jim and Gloria Dragstrem.

More friends had checked into the motel. It was really nice to go to dinner as a group and enjoy a good meal and good company. I think this is what the motor car hobby is all about. Visiting with good friends and making new ones at each excursion.

As December 31 began, it was cloudy and rainy. We lined up our cars for set-on. We were very lucky it didn't rain really hard while setting on. The showers that appeared came while the motor cars were being inspected.

After the safety meeting, it was off to Dillsboro. That's when the heavens opened up. It rained; it rained lightly; it rained heavily. But our spirits were not dampened. We had fun. Every one was prepared. Curtains on open cars were closed, and people were warm and cozy in the enclosed cars. After the turnaround we even got to stop for a quick visit at the GSMR shops before returning to Bryson City.

Each year Tom and Mugz have some type of meal ready for us after the "short" part of the trip on New Year's Eve. The first year I went,

*continued on next page . . .*

## **Great Smokey Mountains Railroad . . . cont'd.**



*A rainy turnaround at Dillsboro, NC*

we had cornbread and black-eyed peas. The last two years we had pizza. This year Tom had made arrangements at a restaurant for a New Year's Eve dinner. It was a very great dinner - a buffet with all kinds of entree's and desserts. Every one went back to the motel stuffed.



*GSMR steam in for repairs, Dillsboro*

New Year's Day began cool and foggy. After the safety meeting we began our trek over the mountain to Andrews. Less than a half-mile from the depot we came to a stop. A tree had fallen over the tracks. It wasn't on the tracks - it had gotten caught on another tree and was suspended above the tracks. There were branches and vines hanging down from the tree, which were causing the problems. Tom quickly took care of the problem and we were on our way.

The fog burned off to give us a nothing but bright sunshine. It had turned into a glorious

day. This made the highlight of the trip even better. The 5% climb up the mountain and the drop into the Andrews. We stopped and staggered our departures up the hill then we carefully descended into Andrews. This is not for the faint of heart and your speeder had better be in good running condition. When Tom says in his ad this is a mountain railroad, you need to believe it. After turnaround and lunch in Andrews, it was back over the mountain to Bryson City. Too soon we were loading our cars and heading back to the motel.



*Clearing tree limbs and vines, Bryson City*

I can't thank Tom and Mugz enough for sponsoring and organizing this event each New Year's. It is one of the most enjoyable trips Debbie and I make with our motor car. Of course, no trip can happen without the cooperation of the host railroad. I want to extend a special thanks to the Great Smokey Mountains Railroad for allowing NARCOA members to operate motor cars on their railroad. I can't wait for the next run!



*Group of happy participants, Andrews, NC*



## ***NARCOA Visits Koppers Susquehanna Plant***

by Todd Hunter

I just wanted to add a few notes, and comment about the Koppers article as follows:

As Director of Marketing for the North Shore Railroads, I always enjoy working with Larry Maynard to help set up and pilot his annual runs on the Shortline railroads we operate here in central Pennsylvania.

One of the neat things we like to do is arrange tours of various industries that we serve. I am always surprised how generous and accommodating our local rail served customers are to allow NARCOA to see what the general public normally does not get to. However, an

even more surprising twist is how much one of our customers appreciated NARCOA visiting them! Koppers Industries not only has allowed NARCOA to tour various aspects of their railroad cross tie production/co-gen operation at their Susquehanna Plant in Muncy, PA (twice in the past 10 years!), but enjoyed it so much that they ran an article in their International corporate company newsletter highlighting the 2006 visit of NARCOA to their Susquehanna Plant. They have kindly allowed it to be reprinted here in *The SETOFF*. Enjoy the following article on the next page.



## **NARCOA Visits Koppers Susquehanna Plant**

*Reprinted with permission from Koppers –  
September 2006 Connection*

*Submitted by Todd Hunter  
Director of Marketing  
North Shore Railroads*



*The cars arrive at the Susquehanna plant in Muncy via the main line track from Williamsport, PA – about a fifteen-mile trip.*

On June 17, 2006 the Susquehanna Plant in Muncy, PA gave a tour for the North American Rail Car Operators Association (NARCOA) tenth annual excursion. Railroad Motorcars, sometimes called “Speeders,” were once used routinely to inspect railroad tracks for defects and to handle track maintenance. The motor cars have a top speed of about 30 m.p.h. but were given the “Speeder” nickname because, compared to the manually powered pump cars they replaced, they were much faster.

Use of motorcars has been phased out over the past couple decades in favor of Hy-Rail vehicles, which are standard road vehicles with retractable guide wheels that can operate on road or rail.



*The group is getting ready to take a tour of the Susquehanna Plant. The cars were on the main line, which ends about a quarter of a mile below the plant.*

Today Railroad Motorcar owners belong to several clubs who obtain permission from railroads to operate on their tracks. These clubs are under the organizational umbrella of NARCOA. To operate a motorcar, it is necessary to pass both a written test and a practical driving test. With permission of the railroads, members operate their motorcars on excursions ranging from one day to over a week in almost all parts of the U.S. and Canada. About forty cars and sixty people toured the Susquehanna plant.

Club members are extremely cautious concerning safety and really enjoy the unique views of the environment that they are able to experience from the rail cars. While on track, they keep the car that is on the rail in front of them in view, but maintain a safe distance behind.

“It was an interesting day and a lot of fun to see a group of people who had a real interest in what Koppers is doing for the railroads, the environment and safety,” said Dick Miller, General Yard Foreman at the Susquehanna plant.



*A manual turntable is placed under each car to turn it around for the return trip back to Williamsport. These cars will only travel in one direction.*



## **Northern Division Run at Syracuse October 14-15, 2006**

by Craig W. Hartman

It was a chilly start as we set-on and had our safety meeting in Cortland, NY. But as the sun came up our first day and we headed out towards Chenango Forks, it promised to be a great day.

With over twenty cars in attendance, we moved out with our pilot, Don, and Steve Weiss leading the way. The fall colors were past peak in some areas, but in full color in others as we wound our way along rivers and picturesque farmland, most of us with our doors closed or curtains down due to the chill in the air.

As we passed though towns of Blodgett Mills, Marathon, and Killawog, the day just seemed to get more enjoyable. The recent installation of an I-pod interface with our headset system supplied us, along with our guests, enjoyable background music while allowing easy conversation when not monitoring or communicating with the railroad. Lunch was supplied at the wye by Chenango Forks.

Somewhere along the way (I think it was above Marathon) I picked up two hitchhikers, as both the Club's Woodings and Bill Nelson's M9 gave up the ghost! I'm glad that when I refurbished my Woodings, I put in a bigger engine, as the three units consist pulled away and tracked perfectly. The ride back was beautiful as well, and the guys in back, on the bar, said it was an enjoyable ride.

On day two we headed out toward Syracuse, under cloudy skies, with some wet rail ahead of us. As we passed out of Cortland, we passed under the "birdhouse" (elevated control tower) that once controlled area traffic, a real find! As we continued we passed thru several historic towns such as Homer (no, not named after the Simpson character), Tully, Onatavia, and Jamesville, each with their own history to tell when American Industry and farming boomed in the area. Jamesville was very interesting, as the station there is under renovation, and some of the exposed supports and architecture were interesting to see.

As we pulled into the Syracuse City limits, it turned from rural to city, quickly. The ride through presented interesting views of the city as well as the Syracuse Mall as it came into sight, as well as a view of the most polluted lake in America. We sided at the Mall Station, and went on in to eat and browse for a while. There is even an operating antique carousel in the upstairs mall.

After being well fed, it was back to the cars for the ride back. While preparing to leave we were passed on the adjacent tracks by Amtrak and several freights. The scenery was great, even though it drizzled a few times, but even in the drizzle all observed caution and arrived safely back for the setoff and the ride home. All-in-all, a good run and one I will look forward to again. Sorry if you missed it.



*The safety meeting*

*continued on next page . . .*



*On the bar*

*Jamesville Station*



*Approaching the Mall*

*continued on next page . . .*



*Need I say more?*



*An interesting shot of Steve going over a very old trestle*



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