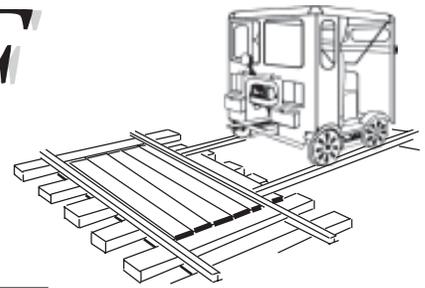


The *SETOFF*



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

July/August 2007, Volume 21 - No. 4



Railcars Meet Steam - Frostburg, MD
Photo by Charlene Morvay

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Please submit materials
for the Sept/Oct issue of
The **SETOFF**
by August 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

We are fully into the operating season now, and as of the first week of June, I am pleased to report that we appear to be operating more safely. I am aware of only one incident in the 2007 operating season. Let's continue to do our best to operate safely.

It appears that the requirement to properly advertise runs in *The SETOFF* and at www.narcoa.org is working to provide more choices of runs and better information flow to you, the operator. Thank you to all that have made the additional effort to reach out with run announcements.

This year marks Kathy's and my 10th anniversary in the hobby. My mentoring run was on the Yreka Western with Al McCracken as my mentor. My starting location that day was the engine track which was very slick with grease and fuel. I thought Al wouldn't stop laughing when I let out the clutch and a huge cloud of smoke came off the rear wheels. All I could see in the rear view mirror was smoke. First thought was I'd blown the engine. No, that was running well. Second thought was the spark arrestor needed a good

cleaning. Then I remembered the grease all around and hoped I had just completed my first and last burn-out in a motorcar. Al worked with me through that mentoring, and went on to become a good friend. Thanks, Al, for all you do for the motorcar hobby and the Niles Canyon Railway.

I mention my mentoring as a lead-in to how important I feel that the mentoring process has become. First started on the west coast, it is now a portion of our national procedures to assist new members into the hobby. Warren Riccitelli, Area 1 Director, called me the other night to discuss several issues and brought up how many new people he is mentoring in his area. That's great news, for the continuing success of any organization is new members, while maintaining the interest of current members. Tom Norman tells me every year we seem to be able to replace those that drop out of the insurance program with new applicants. We remain in excess of 925 operators insured for 2007. Properly mentored, a new member has a better understanding of the set-on and setoff process, respect for the railroad and other members, and a better knowledge of NARCOA and operating affiliate rules.

A reminder to operators when you have guests with you, please take time before a run to make them aware of our rules and policies. Guests need proper attire (boots, and clothing) appropriate to locale and temperature. Before the run, tell them about food availability, and water and toilet facilities during the run. Please take a few minutes when you invite them to explain what will be happening at safety meeting, during the run, and at turn around. I recently saw two long-time operators leave passengers in the motorcar while raising the cars on turntables. I see improper foot wear like the new rubber clogs, and open-toed sandals. It truly is the motorcar operator's responsibility to have guests arrive ready to run. The EC should not have to be a policeman on these issues.

Lastly, while we are running well, I'd like to see more consideration of track conditions and a proper and safe operating speed. I recently saw a video with motorcars on abandoned rail running at speed in forward and reverse. A few weeks ago an operator told me how fast he had to go to catch up to the car in front of him on a McCloud run. The Board and Judicial Committee see all incident reports, and too many incidents are from traveling too fast on poorly maintained rails.

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 Representative if you are coming so we can have an appropriate amount of space for all attendees.

Best regards and safe running.



Some guys will do anything to accumulate miles!

by Dick Forde

The Town of Windham, NH will soon be acquiring a B&M caboose to complement its historic rail depot area. Recently some townsfolk installed 49 feet of track in the depot area to hold the caboose. Not being one to pass up new track, on Monday, May 28, 2007, Dick Forde put his M-9 on the track (with permission) and did an inspection prior to the arrival of the caboose. Being Memorial Day, many townspeople turned out to witness and help with the inspection. The track passed inspection.

Total miles accumulated: 0.0092803 (0.0185606 round trip)



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.

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Letters To The Editor



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

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Please put LETTERS in the subject line.

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

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:

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To Our Fellow Motorcar Friends:

Les and I would like to thank all of you for the many cards, letters, and gifts. Your kind words have meant so much to both of us during this big bump in the road.

All we can do is take one day at a time and hope for the best. I don't know if we will ever be able to go on another motorcar trip, but we certainly have a lot of fond memories of all the past trips we did take. All those old people knew what they were talking about when they told me to go when we could.

You are all a great bunch of people and we are so glad we got to know you.

Sincerely,

Cindy and Les King

Note from the Editor:

I want to thank Les for his guidance when Jim and I first got into the hobby seven years ago. We had no idea what we were looking for in a car, so we called Les and he invited us to come to his shop. Les spent an entire afternoon with us explaining the hobby, differences in railcars, and what to look for. I shudder to think what we could have ended up with if not for his guidance.

I also want to thank Cindy for the fine sewing she did for the hobby.

We will greatly miss them both and we wish them the very best in the future.

Annual Meeting Notice

If you plan on attending the annual meeting in September, and wish to stay at the meeting place (The Sheraton at O'Hare), please e-mail **Hank Brown** at trainguyz@charter.net for reservations.





From The Director's Desk
Area 1 (ME, NH, VT, NY, MA, CT, RI)

by Warren Riccitelli
Area 1 Director

In late May, NERCA sponsored a six-day excursion in the states of Maine and New Hampshire. It was a great time, and more importantly, a safe time. We traveled through the White mountains in New Hampshire, and along the rugged Maine coast, with great weather and great escorts. Usually our escorts are a roadmaster, or lower-level manager, along with someone from the track department. They also gave us tidbits of local history. Always guiding, they leave the exact itinerary to us.

We then traveled to the 19th Annual Hobo Motorcar Run in Lincoln, NH. Nineteen years running, I think I have been to at least fourteen of them. Even though this is not a NARCOA event, it is handled with rules that seem to be equal to NARCOA's, and each year more of the participants are NARCOA members. Over 50 cars participated this year with about half from NARCOA. And like a NARCOA event, they started with the safety meeting. The standard things were covered: safety, flagging, schedule, bridges, lunch, and the usual prayer for no rain.

But something stuck out this year. The owner of the railroad was in attendance. Ben Clark, president of the Hobo Railroad, a railroad enthusiast, rebuilder of historical equipment, great advocate for tourist railroads, and more importantly, a supporter of motor cars. His words that morning were, "You have the

opportunity to be an ambassador today."

That struck me. I don't often hear those words. Stop and think about that for a minute. An ambassador for the railroad brings me back to the article I wrote last year about "The Blue Angels and Motorcars".

We in the hobby have the ability to be ambassadors for the host railroad. Our standard practice should be to wave or "toot" at a father and son waving to us, be gracious at grade crossings, explain the hobby to people who might be interested, and show people that a railroad is still using the tracks. You may have the opportunity to do more, as have I.

I have been invited to display my motor car at the Hobo Railroad 20th Anniversary. I got the call and could not say no. It's over a 400 mile round trip, and I am going to show appreciation to a railroad that is having its 20th Anniversary and a railroad that allows us to have motorcar events such as the annual Snow Flake Run.

In addition to this, I have exhibited at the annual "Great Railroad Show" in Springfield, MA, the past few years. And have been invited to the White River Junction "Railroad Days" in September. Is there more we can do? I have taught about, and exhibited my car at the Railroad Merit Badge at the Boys Scout National Jamboree, and for the past few years taught at the Merit Badge College held annually in RI.

Stop and think - have you done anything for the railroads or the hobby lately?



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

Hi, Area 4 Members!

Teamwork is what makes our hobby run smoothly and opens doors for future motorcar runs. Excursion Coordinators working with hosting railroads to hammer out run details, and excursion attendees working with one another and the EC, make an event run smoothly. Last weekend I got to witness this sort of teamwork in action.

I hosted an excursion on the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad in Bryson City, NC. Many new members attended, along with many veteran members that were returning after a long absence and, of course, our usual bunch of "misfits" that show up for each run. We had trains to dodge, new members to work with and help, breakdowns to contend with, and a railroad dispatcher that was only on duty until 5:00 p.m. All of the above was explained and absorbed at the morning safety meeting, and as our group listened intently, they made it their goal to operate safely, have fun, and work together to accomplish all we had to do that day. Our Great Smoky Mountain Railroad excursion team did a fine job of working together, and I was very proud to be part of that team!

I still have space on my annual November 11, 2007 Great Smoky Mountains Railroad excursion, and open house at my fabrication shop/railroad. There will be plenty of handmade artwork and jewelry available for Christmas gifts, plenty of free good food, and I should have enough rail laid between my bridges to allow some motorcar riding. Sign up now - space is limited!



I realize that some of you guys have been experiencing heavy flooding and storms throughout your state, but others, including much of Area 4, have been experiencing extreme drought. We are experiencing fast moving, wind fanned forest fires that we've never really had in this area before. I am urging all of you that smoke to take a little more time to think about the consequences of what your cigarette could do. An ash blown off your cigarette while running down the rails could easily start a fire. If your cigarette butt is just flicked away, it could also very easily start a fire. So if you really must smoke, do not smoke while you are running down the rails and, for safety, carry a small covered ash tray that you can extinguish your cigarette in and then drop inside. If a motorcar excursion attendee started a fire due to carelessness with cigarettes, the railroad would ultimately be blamed for it, and the end result would be very bad public relations for a hosting railroad that was nice enough to let us run on their rails. So let's think twice about our smokes!

That's it guys. I'm outta here 'til next time.





**The Safety Comment:
Wow Are You In High Gear**
by Bob Knight, Chairman, NARCOA Safety Committee

The motorcar season is off to a great start with many excursions taking place all over the map . . . and so is the mentoring process. You “veterans of the rails” have been stepping up to the plate in record numbers this first half of the motorcar year.

You are producing a record breaking season with 57 new or returning members being mentored and receiving their “M”. The most you have ever mentored in the first half of the year is 31.

I believe this is a good indicator of renewed interest in our great hobby, your enthusiasm for the mentoring process, and a great partnership with the excursion coordinators. You are providing an important function not only for the new members, but also help in providing a **safe** excursion, as other members do take notice of your efforts and have made very positive comments.

Another important point is that *Safety First* thoughts are planted in the mind of the person being mentored, and you, the teacher/coach, gain by having the rules and safe operation refreshed in your mind.

To honor this new benchmark, the Safety Committee and your complete NARCOA Leadership Team would like to recognize and thank the members who have taken the effort to step up to the plate. They are: Kelley Rick, John William Schmidt, Wayne Rousseau, Paul A. Zaro, Paul Goldzung,

Phil Gandy, Ron Long, Carl Hymen, Jim Hopkins, C. Pat Coleman, John Helmuth, Leland Stewart, P.G. Howard, Bob Knight, Kenneth Huffines, Warren Riccitelli, Tom Falicon, Dean L. Grote, Ken Keels, Steven Rinker, Daniel L. Hetzel, Carl Schneider, David W. Calwell, Tom Ludlam, Phil Pique, John H. Daniel, Eric Muller, Arnie Lipshetz, Karl Hovanitz, Grant Vogel, Peter Stagg, Richard Forde, Gylan A. Hartley, James Hughes, Leland Stewart, David McClain, Ken Annett, James A. Brown and Terry G. Geiger.

It should be noted that many of the above members have mentored more than one new member. We would also be remiss if we did not give a special thanks to Tom Norman, who records all the new “M’s” in the records for the use of the excursion coordinators.

Keep the home runs going, and make it a safe motorcar season!



Hints and Tips: Enhancing Stoplight Visibility

by Ron Peterson

During a safety inspection the inspector advised that my car's stoplights were marginal in meeting the requirement to be easily visible in daylight at 300 feet, and he would like to see improved visibility in the future. The lozenge-style lights use dual filament lamps to provide both tail and brake lights and were marginal on a bright sunny day due to the lens construction and the lack of a bright internal reflector. The most obvious solution was to replace these lights with more expensive LED look alike units to preserve the method of mounting which would require cutting into the wiring. Since there was no practical way to increase light intensity, ways were devised to increase visibility.

The interior of the lamp body was not conducive to adding an aluminum foil reflector so the lens and bulbs were removed, the lamp receptacles were masked with tape, and the black insides of the receptacles were sprayed with shiny silver spray paint. The lens was used to make a mask out of light cardboard which fit snugly over the lamp bodies, and was of sufficient size, to prevent overspray from getting on the car during application.

Originally, when applied, the stoplights were set-up to flash to provide discrimination from the taillights. The flasher unit flashed at a high rate which, when the brakes were applied, caused the flashes to lose some discrimination from each other. A replacement unit was obtained that flashed at a slower rate and, while not increasing visibility, enhanced the "attention getting" of the stoplights.

Since the stoplights flashed against a taillight background, visibility would increase if a dark background was present. A suitable stoplight switch with NO and NC or Form C contacts could not be located so a Radio Shack high current auxiliary relay with Form C contacts, used in automotive security systems, was employed. When energized by the brake switch, the relay permits the stop and taillights to flash in unison. Since the headlights (flood type) were on the same circuit as the taillights, they were allowed to flash also. The lights were also angled outward about 15 degrees to provide more visibility to oncoming vehicles at crossings. A third headlight (spot type) provides the headlight function at night. Should the relay coil fail, operation of the lights will revert to their original form.

Finally, two hoods were constructed from black PVC flower bed edging to block the sun from entering the lamp body at a high angle. The bodies of the lights were drilled and the hoods attached with self-tapping screws.



Twice Lucky on the HOG

by Kenneth Huffines

Photos by Jean Huffines

On April Fool's Day, the NARCOA excursion on the Heart of Georgia Railroad had stopped in downtown Cordele for a break at the Heart Of Georgia's ticket office and passenger boarding platform. The break also gave time for our escort to arrange crossing the busy CSX and Norfolk Southern tracks, which cross each other at a 90-degree diamond. NS is double-tracked. HOG's tracks cut across the other three slight angle. All the crossings are within a few feet of each other.

This is a busy junction but luckily we only had to wait 10 minutes for one train, a northbound freight on CSX. As it was going by, the brakes started squealing and the train started slowing down. It was slowing down fast! It ground to a halt with the last car a few yards ahead of our excursion. From where we stood it looked like all the diamonds were blocked!

Somebody's scanner picked up word that a car near the front of the train derailed. It wasn't going to move any time soon!

But luck was with us. The train tail had just gotten across HOG's tracks, but not NS. The photos show how close it was.

Our escort confirmed nothing was going to move. The call was made to saddle up and skedaddle. Things were likely to get ugly in Cordele while this mess was straightened out. As we headed out, a NS freight crept up to the junction to see what the problem was. Trains were stacking up already!

We were very lucky. Had the CSX train stopped just a little quicker, it would have blocked HOG's tracks and our excursion we would be over, except for the 20 miles back to our set-on. (We had another 40 miles to travel after Cordele.)

On our return trip, we were lucky again. We received word that CSX had things cleaned up and were ready to release the junction. Could we hurry up and get across? Because if not, we'd have to wait for some of the backed-up trains to clear out. Our lead motorcar was already approaching the diamonds and we

were able to get across without holding up the trains any further. We stopped for a break at the depot again and it was just a couple of minutes before the first train came through. Had we been any later, we may have been stuck for hours waiting for the trains to clear. As it was, we had a lucky time at Cordele - twice!



Tracks in the foreground are CSX. That's the end of the derailed train. You can see how close we came to having our tracks blocked! The NS tracks are 60 feet ahead.



The NS tracks are completely blocked by the derailed train. A car and a half is all NS needed to be in the clear, but we got all the luck this day.



Maine and New Hampshire Excursion

by Larry and Connie Shaw

We had the opportunity to travel to the New England area and took part in a six day run on three different railroads in Maine and New Hampshire from May 27-June 1. We would like to say coordinators Warren Riccitelli and Al Elliott were excellent hosts. The event was sponsored by NERCA, and I must say they went all out to show their "West coast visitors" a great time on some super railroads. The event had a large attendance, the cars were clean and they all functioned well, with proof being no breakdowns or other incidents. To my delight, over 20 of them were belted cars (poppers).

We started with the Maine, Montreal and Atlantic Railroad with set on at Houlton (Northeastern Maine) and traveling to Presque Isle. In Oakfield the Railroad station Museum was opened for us and we were given maps of the rail. We then took several branches of the rail thru potato farms and pine forests and ventured back to the main line and returning to Houlton for a total round trip of 206 miles .

We then were hosted by the Maine Eastern Railroad with set on in Wiscasset and traveled to Warren. We traveled thru marshland and the Sheepcot River area. We saw fields full of wild azaleas in full bloom. Our lunch stop was highly requested, so we could all enjoy Moody's Diner. Moody's Diner is a somewhat famous pie stop! We ran 120 RT miles of beautiful coast line with coastal bridges.

Our next set-on was in Bowdoinham with us taking the lower road. We ran up to Gardener which was a turning spot and lunch stop. They opened the train station for us to see their restoration project. Wow! What a surprise. The train station has an amazing sign collection that must date back

to the 30's or 40's. A must-see, if passing through the area. Upon arrival in Bowdoinham, Warren gave the group the choice to run to Brunswick or set-off. We crossed Merrymeeting Bay in Topsham once again, another great coastal bridge overlooking Fort Adams. This track has been identified for future passenger service. It was great rail. It follows the Kennebec River on its way from Brunswick to Augusta about 50 RT miles.

We then traveled to The Conway Scenic Railroad in New Hampshire. We were told that this was the most beautiful trackage in the eastern U.S. and they were right!! We traveled thru Crawford Notch and viewed Mt. Washington. It took us high onto ledges and crossed the Frankenstein Trestle and stopped at the Crawford House, all the while overlooking the White Mountains. We had lunch at the foot of the Cog Railroad. We didn't have time to go back and ride it, but is something we would like to do on our next visit. We ran a total of 88 RT miles.

We then met Warren and Al in Lincoln, New Hampshire, to participate in a trackcar weekend on the Hobo Railroad. This event is in its 19th consecutive year! The coordinator was Paul Yorkis and he did a great job with 62 cars on that rail and no breakdowns.

If any of you get the opportunity to travel to the east coast to do a motorcar run, we must say you will absolutely enjoy every minute of the experience The people made us feel so at home and were so friendly. We plan to go back again sometime in the near future. We would like to thank Warren and Al for being great East Coast Ambassadors to two Left Coasters!!!

(See photos, next page.)



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