

# Roundhouse Notes

Paducah Chapter  
National Railway Historical Society  
Feb 2014

This month's Newsletter is late due to weather conditions and work. The following article is reprinted from the Heart of Dixie Railroad museum bulletin dated September 1996. The story is by Victor Rice Jr.

## Troop Train Home

In the Fall of 1945 I was an Army captain stationed at Erding, Germany as a base ordinance officer. This big German air base had not been too badly beaten up by our forces and we intended to use it for our occupation force. The war was over and our troops were relaxing and settling into a peacetime routine. Ordnance was mainly concerned with keeping base vehicles operating.

The Army had devised a priority system to determine which men would go home first, based on length of service overseas, combat and other factors. In Early December my name came up with a shipment of 14 officers and 400 men. As senior officer I was automatically in command.

Within a few days a string of railroad cars, the famous WWI 40&8 (forty men and eight horses), was pushed on the siding at the base. Immediately we set about making the cars more comfortable for our trip. Scrounging mostly German stuff, we made a generator car and strung wire so that we had lights. Bunk Beds we obtained from I don't know where, along with mattresses and blankets. Anything else that would aid comfort to our trip was added – a kitchen car which proved unnecessary, as the quartermaster had set up mess stops for the train along the way. After all these improvements we referred to our train as the 40&8 Pullman, Homebound Express, or whatever.

On the day of departure we were cheered on our way by a good-sized crowd, as I believe we were the first shipment home from Erding.

Before departure I had briefed the troops as to what I had learned of our trip and had given certain orders, one of which was "don't sell government property to the black marketeers" – whom we were bound to meet at any stop. I further added that it was ok to sell their personal property.

The officers' car was in the middle of the train for easy access to the troops. For train security we were given 1 45, which was put in custody of one of the lieutenants. This was somewhat of a joke, as I knew that the train was fairly bristling with liberated German weapons, from knives to automatics, being taken home as souvenirs.

Our motive power was steam and our progress was slow I guess because the rail system had not been fully repaired from war damage. In the middle of the first night the officers' car had to be replaced because of problems with the wheel trucks. That was a mess, disrupting our lighting system for the entire train. We finally moved all our property, beds and all, into a substitute car.

The Army quartermaster and Transportation Corps had done a good job of establishing mess stops along the tracks, manned in part by German prisoners. Luckily the Fall weather was good and we could keep the car doors open and enjoy the scenery when we were not shooting the bull.

Somewhere in France the train came to a stop in a field. Immediately black market merchants came up to the cars and started to bargain.

I noticed they only approached the cars at the end of the train. When I spotted a Frenchman with an armload of GI blankets it made me mad. I called for the 45m jumped to the ground and caught up to this guy. I cocked the 45 and put it to his head. Such a look of terror I had never seen. I am sure at that moment at least one Frenchman wished the Germans had one the war. I took the blankets away from him and made a quick retreat. I started for the train with my load of blankets just as the engineer gave two blasts on the whistle, indicating that the train would be underway. I certainly did not want to be left so I threw the blankets into the last car and jumped in after them. In a way this entire episode was quite funny. Here was this long train stopped for no apparent reason, and as I removed the blankets from the Frenchman all 400 GIs were crowding the car doors, cheering and hollering.

The trip proceeded without incident for another day until we pulled into LeHavre in the middle of the night. It was something to detrain in the dark, as there was only one feeble light coming from a small shack where a lone corporal was coordination the trucks moving us to a tent staging area, where we were to stay until a ship was available.

As we detrained there was quite a commotion in several cars back. Some of the GIs had caught a Frenchman already trying to remove items from the cars we were leaving. They gave him quite a working over before he got away. I wasn't about to interfere; at that point we didn't like the French too much. I am sure they were back looking for loot as soon as we left. Some days later were loaded on to a Liberty ship for our Atlantic crossing.

# NEWS AND VIEWS

*Bob Johnston*

## **CHANGE OF PLANS:**

Looks like I was premature on the announcement in last month's NEWS AND VIEWS that the P&L Office Car, Bluegrass I, after the Legislative Reception at Frankfort would go to Watsch Railway Contractor shop at Stearns, KY for remodeling into a reception car. It turns out that was a tentative plan and P&L management decided not to implement it at this time. Of course it is understandable that any Short Line or Regional railroad (or any business for that matter) might be hesitant to spend a large sum of money on a project that will have only an indirect (if that) effect on the bottom line. Therefore, after the reception the two passenger cars and the Power Car returned to Paducah and are now back home at their siding in North Yard. At this time, there is no other significant news that I know about, to report from P&L.

**VMV:** There is not much to report from VMV either; however, on January 9<sup>th</sup>, I saw P&L's Louisville Cardinal SD 70 2013 (still haven't seen the U of K). Also on

hand that day were GP-38-2s GMTX 2164 & 2264 in new blue & white; SD 60 GMTX 9041 in faded blue & white; and switcher GMTX 163.

## **ARCHIVES FIND HOME:**

Over 25 years ago when P&L took over from I.C., then new employee Mike Favre was told to throw out many of the I. C.'s employee and other files from the office at 1500 Kentucky Ave. Fortunately, instead, he took them to the Princeton Railroad Museum (this was before the Paducah RR Museum was established). When the contents of that museum were sold at auction last year, the seniority lists and other records were purchased by rail fan, Mike R. (don't know his last name) a member of P&L news group. Recently, in another fortuitous decision, he donated them to the McCracken County Library. Nathan Lynn, the library's Reference Curator, reports that, "Once these are processed they will be of great importance to genealogist searching for individuals who worked in the railroad industry." It is heartening to know how these two Mikes and countless other individuals over the years have

saved valuable artifacts and records, and, at the same time, disturbing to realize how much has been lost because of neglect and apathy.

## **WINTER (RR) BLUES:**

The well discussed extreme weather has caused massive problems for railroads all over the country. On Monday January 6<sup>th</sup> three Amtrak trains (*Illinois Zephyr*, *Southwest Chief*, and *California Zephyr*) inbound to Chicago were blocked by snow drifts on BNSF tracks and passengers stranded for up to 14 hours before it was considered safe to rescue them by charter buses. On Monday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, Amtrak, because of the bitter cold, annulled several corridor trains out of Chicago including the *Saluki and Illini*, but did run the long distance, *City of New Orleans*. These are only examples from our region.

**DISCOUNTS:** On January 15<sup>th</sup>, Amtrak announced 20% discounts on three Illinois Corridor trains including the *Saluki and Illini*. The code to get the discount is V418.

**BIG BOY NEWS:** The long journey has begun. On Satur-

day January 25<sup>th</sup>, UP 4-8-8-4 4014, had already been moved on panel tracks across the parking lot at Pomona, CA to the adjacent Metrolink Commuter main line. On that night, the panel track was temporarily connected to the main, and 4014 was picked up by UP's SP Heritage unit SD 70MACe 1996, and moved to Covina for display at the Metrolink station there. From Covina the big steamer was moved to the UP main line at Basset, and from there on to UP (former SP) yards at West Colton. It remained there until the weekend of February 1-2<sup>nd</sup>, where it was again on display to the public. According to the TRAINS web site, Ed Dickens, UP Steam Manager, says the move from West Colton to Cheyenne will not come until March.

**CRUDE OIL STANDARDS:** Conversations continue, and will for the foreseeable future on new standards for rail transport of crude oil. Because of fracking in North Dakota and other areas, there has been a 400 per cent increase in such shipments since 2005, and as reported in last month's NEWS AND VIEWS, there have been a number of derailment disasters. The NTSB has made several recommendations to the FRA and the

Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Administration for enhanced standards both for equipment and procedures and these have been embraced by the Association of American Railroads. The Transportation Safety Board of Canada is also a joint participant in these new recommendations.

**ICHS BOARD MEETING:** The mid-winter meeting of the Illinois Central Historical Society took place on February 1<sup>st</sup> in Paducah at the Paducah & Louisville headquarters building. The last two years it was held in the meeting room at the Paducah Railroad Museum, but that was not possible this year because of renovations. Paducah Chapter members John Deming and Lou Jacquith are board members.

**MUSEUM:** The new carpet has been installed, as has a new thermo pane, easy opening window facing 2<sup>nd</sup> Street replacing the old one which had deteriorated and was not insulated. Two coats of cream colored paint have been applied to the walls and beams in the front gallery by James and a few volunteers. Work began February 1<sup>st</sup> on setting up the Gift Shop in the new location on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street wall; it will have more room and accessible work space.

Also on that day work began on bringing back in a few display, but it is only a beginning. However, it looks like we should be able to open on schedule in March. Curator Amy Blewett says she does not plan to return every item that was there before, but save some for rotation next season. Of course much work remains to be done. John Maxfield says the simulator will be ready for opening, but possibly not the CTC for a time. Most of the particle board has been installed on the back wall except for the top row which is the hardest because it requires two workers, and must be cut to fit. =====FLASH11 John Deming has advised by email Sunday night that he has completed installation of the particle board in the back room.

**Roundhouse Notes**



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Troops prepare to travel home from Germany after WW2 on "40 & 8" cars.

Gosh! Its almost time for the meeting! We sure don't want to miss it.



**TUESDAY**  
**February 11th**  
**7PM**  
**Second Floor**  
**McCracken County**  
**Library**

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