

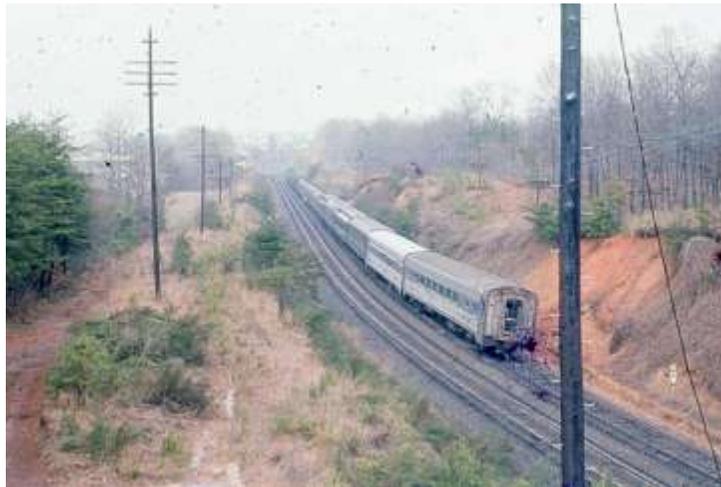


# BLUE RIDGE DISPATCHER

Vol. 24

November 2017

No. 11



Chapter Member Wayland Moore brings us the November program. He was thinking of calling it Portfolio of Prized Perfect Photos Presentation for your viewing Pleasure. Alas, he says it is a series of groupings of "really, things looked like that!?" slides taken between the very early '60's and late '80's (is it really that long ago???). The program is the last selection of photos from the Dick Myers collection with some of the focus on Lynchburg (C&O emphasized) and Charlottesville, Spencer/Linwood, a couple from Baltimore and then a few additional interesting ones. Make plans to attend . You'll be glad you did.

OH! Can anyone guess where the cover shots were taken?

**Wednesday, November 8, 2017.**

**Charley's Restaurant. 707 Graves Mill Rd. Lynchburg, VA.**

Dinner: 6p -7p. Business: 7p - 7:30p. Program: 7:30p.



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER  
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Lynchburg, Virginia



**BLUE RIDGE DISPATCHER – FROM THE PRESIDENT  
NOVEMBER 2017**

**2018 BRC DUES**

Blue Ridge Chapter 2018 dues are now being collected and are again \$13.00 per year! We hope that you will also continue your National membership, however, National dues must be paid directly to NRHS. National dues will not be accepted by the BRC.

**A HEARTFELT “THANK YOU”!**

Rick and Rick-2 Johnson and their families wish to thank the Blue Ridge Chapter, its members and friends for the outpouring of support, prayers and condolences for the loss their mother and grandmother, Freda Johnson, who died October 5th. They would also like to thank the BRC for the beautiful flowers and thank those members, family and friends who attended Freda’s memorial service October 12th. They extend a special “thank you” to BRC member, Reverend Lloyd Lipscomb, for conducting Freda’s service. Rick said “Mom loved railroading and always loved attending BRC events and socializing with everyone. She knew many of you and would always tell me when she ran into someone at the store or mall! If she knew someone was ill, she would always ask me about them too!”

**Annual Christmas Banquet Announcement** - On Saturday December 2, 2017, the members and guests of the Blue Ridge Chapter will hold our annual Christmas Banquet. We have new caterers this year and new offerings on the buffet. As in year's past we will start our social hour at 6:00 pm. that includes steamed shrimp, sodas, iced tea and coffee. Fruit punch and munchies will also be available. At 7:00 pm. our home-style buffet dinner with a freshly prepared salad for starters, winding up with a variety of pies for dessert. Following dinner we will have a short railroad presentation to round out the evening.

Firm reservations are required. Cost is \$20.00 per member or guest. Friends of the BRC, NRHS are most welcome. Please contact me if you have any questions. Your participation is strongly encouraged and will be appreciated. If we don't have twenty five or more attend this banquet it will most likely be our last catered Christmas Banquet. It will be held in the former Southern Railway Depot in Altavista, Va. currently the Altavista Area Chamber of Commerce, Washington Street, Altavista, Va. 24517.

Hope to see many of you there. It's always a fun evening and a way to thank our significant others for all they do for us.

DEADLINE for reservations is November meeting night, November 8.

Regards, Norris

**Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS  
Minutes of Meeting – August 9, 2017**

President Rick Johnson called the meeting to order at Charley's Restaurant at the new time of 7:00 pm. The new time, in an attempt to get members home a little earlier, was initiated after concerns of meeting length was expressed by several members. Rick welcomed 22 members and 5 guests for a total of 27 in attendance. Our guests for the evening were Dona Duvall, Jean Fielding, Peggy Deyerle and the evening's program presenter, and former BRC member and newsletter editor, Jim King and his guest, Jerry Ledford, both from the Ashville, NC area. Jim was also BRC's secretary in 1985. Rick offered a special “welcome back” to Norris Deyerle and thanked him for providing a great Amtrak program for the July meeting. July was Norris' first meeting back after a year away due to illness. Rick also asked that the reading of the July 2017 minutes be dispensed. The minutes were approved as published in the “Blue Ridge Dispatcher”.

Treasurer's Report: John Tanner.

Old Business: Norris, John Tanner and Barry Moorefield brought everyone up to date on Lynchburg Rail Day 2017 plans, which is only several days away and urged everyone to help out. Rail Day is BRC's only money making event, and for the BRC to continue to make contributions to worthy railroad preservation efforts, it requires

everyone's help to continue Rail Day. Norris put a motion on the floor for the BRC to make a \$250.00 donation to Friends of High Bridge Trail, for preservation of two cast iron N&W Whistle Post signs, recently uncovered along the trail's right of way! The motion was seconded by Ed DeBary and was passed by vote.

New Business: The BRC Christmas Banquet is scheduled for Saturday, December 2, 2017 at the Southern Railway Station in Altavista, Va. After passing a vote, cost will increase to \$20.00 per person, as opposed to \$15.00 from previous years. The BRC will subsidize all additional cost. There will be a new caterer offering a different selection.

Vice President's Report: Gale McKinley – Asked everyone to please pay their National dues. Rick asked Gale to verify with NRHS, the receipt of Eric Spitzer's National dues.

Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS Chairman of Virginia's Rail Heritage Region Partners: Norris Deyerle - No report.

Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS National Representative: Rick thanked Bob Leslie for conducting the July meeting and taking the minutes in his absence.

Webmaster Report: John Siegle - Apologized for the late posting of the July newsletter to the website.

Editor's Report: Garland Harper - Absent - Rick thanked Garland for getting the newsletter out.

Program: Special guest, Jim King, provides the evening's program consisting of slides around the Lynchburg area during the 1980s!

Upcoming Programs: Rick will provide the program for the September 13th meeting. There is also a "Fun" meeting September 27th. Rick asked whether it should be slides or digital? There was no response.

The business meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Rick Johnson, acting BRC Secretary

## **Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS Minutes of Meeting – September 13, 2017**

President Rick Johnson called the meeting to order at Charley's Restaurant at 7:31 pm. So much for the new time! Rick welcomed 25 members and 5 guests for a total of 30 in attendance. Our guests for the evening were Dona Duvall, Greg Haugan, Fred Terry, Steve Hutchison and Roanoke NRHS member, Mike Voiland. Rick thanked special guest, Jim King, for presenting a wonderful slide program of the Lynchburg area during the 1980s at the August meeting! Rick announced that he had not completed the minutes for the August meeting. Once completed, they would run in the October "Blue Ridge Dispatcher".

Treasurer's Report: John Tanner.

Old Business: John Tanner gave a recap of a very successful Rail Day! He and Norris thanked everyone for their hard work. Norris noted that next year's 2018 Rail Day would mark the 40th anniversary and planning had begun.

A decision to book the Ruritan Club for next year's event needed to be made and a commitment needed from meeting attendees to assist. A vote was taken for a 2018 Rail Day and a "yes" vote was a show of commitment for that individual casting the vote. There were (14) "yes" and (9) abstentions. There were no "No" votes. The attendance sheet count at the end of the night reflected two members who did not vote. Norris briefly discussed the upcoming December 2nd Christmas Banquet.

New Business: Rick asked that anyone who would like to present a program next year, let him know.

Vice President's Report: Gale McKinley – Not present. Rick had received an email from Gale verifying the receipt of Eric Spitzer's National dues.

Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS Chairman of Virginia's Rail Heritage Region Partners: Norris Deyerle - No notes or memory of Norris' report exist (Rick).

Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS National Representative: Bob Leslie - No notes or memory of Bob's report exist (Rick).

Webmaster Report: John Siegle - (no notes or memory of John's report exist (Rick).

Editor's Report: Garland Harper - Rick thanked Garland for getting the newsletter out. No notes or memory of Garland's report exist (Rick).

Program: Rick Johnson presented the evening's program "Everything Must Change" in a selection of slides, where a photographer today, would be unable to recreate the same scene.

Upcoming Programs: Rick announced the "Fun" meeting September 27th will be digital and asked everyone to bring something to share. The October 11th meeting will feature Kurt Reisweber!

50/50 Winner: Our guest, Steve Hutchison!

The business meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Rick Johnson, acting BRC Secretary

## **Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS Minutes of Meeting – October 11, 2017**

President Rick Johnson called the meeting to order at Charley's Restaurant at 7:30 pm. Rick welcomed 19 members and 2 guests for a total of 21 in attendance. Our guests for the evening were Dona Duvall and Michael Patrick. Rick announced that his mother, Freda Johnson, passed away October 5th after a short illness. There will be a memorial service tomorrow night at Tharp Funeral Home conducted by BRC member, Reverend Lloyd Lipscomb. Rick also announced that Bob Leslie took a fall for unknown reasons. Bob was in attendance, however, was not driving until a cause can be determined. Rick thanked the Roanoke Chapter, NRHS for receipt of a \$500.00 check, received for BRC manpower supplied on the 611 trips this year. The minutes for the September meeting have not been completed. Once completed, the August and September minutes will appear in the November "Blue Ridge Dispatcher".

Treasurer's Report: John Tanner.

Old Business: Norris discussed the upcoming December 2nd Christmas Banquet to be held at the Altavista Train Station. He stated cost is \$20.00 per person and he would be accepting payments this evening. He would like to receive all payments by the end of November 8th meeting. Rick asked that anyone wishing to present a program next year, see him.

New Business: Bob Leslie suggested the BRC make a \$500.00 donation for a NRHS Heritage Grant. Rick asked Bob to find out more about NRHS needs before a decision is made.

Vice President's Report: Gale McKinley – Asked everyone to please pay their National dues. NRHS dues remain \$50.00 for 2018, there being no increase. There will also be a new online dues payment system implemented.

Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS Chairman of Virginia's Rail Heritage Region Partners: Norris Deyerle - No report.

Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS National Representative: Bob Leslie - Planning to attend upcoming NRHS director's meeting.

Webmaster Report: John Siegle - No report.

Editor's Report: Garland Harper - absent - Rick thanked Garland for getting the newsletter out.

Program: Kurt Reisweber provided a very informative and entertaining slide presentation of railroading in western Pennsylvania during the Penn Central, Conrail and Norfolk Southern eras.

Upcoming Programs: Wayland Moore will provide the program for the November 8th meeting. There will be NO "Fun" meeting in November due to Thanksgiving.

50/50 Winner: A restaurant guest won!

The business meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Rick Johnson, acting BRC Secretary

### **A December program sneak preview**

Earlier this year I was fortunate to view a program titled "Depots of Amherst County" at the Amherst County Historical Museum. I walked away thinking this would be enthusiastically received at one of our Blue Ridge Chapter meetings.

I have now arranged for this program to be presented at our meeting on December 13. I realize that December is a busy, even hectic month for many, but I urge you to set aside time for this special event. I feel it behooves us to have a good turnout whenever an "outsider", i.e., non-member, takes the time to share their railroad experiences with us.

I will offer more details in the December newsletter to whet your appetite. This program contains many local images most of us have never seen; trust me, you will not be disappointed.

- Skip "Groundhog" Hansberry

## Roanoke, VA, is now an Amtrak destination. A trip/event report by G. R. Harper

Most of us knew eight years and one month ago that the extension of Northeast Regional service to Lynchburg was the first step in a process to bring passenger train service to more places in Virginia. Northeast Regional train service was announced in April 2009. With Lynchburg as the southern terminus the first train departed Lynchburg for points north on October 1, 2009. What a surprising success story the train turned out to be! Far more people rode the train than observers thought would ride. Service was augmented a few years later when connecting bus service to and from Roanoke and Blacksburg was initiated by Roanoke's transit authority, Valley Metro.

The process to expand service took a giant leap forward on October 31, 2017, when the Lynchburg Regional, as it was informally called by us locals, was extended to Roanoke. Regrettably, for the local train watchers the daily drama of the Regional being turned on the wye at Montview Yard and then watching the train return to the small yard at Kemper Street Station to tie up for the night for servicing would come to a close.

Lynchburg is no longer the terminus now, but just a stop on the line. Overall, the move will prove beneficial. Indications are that bookings to and from Roanoke are strong. Passenger counts at Lynchburg will suffer, needless to say, since potential riders from the Southwest Virginia area no longer have to come to Lynchburg to board.

I, your Editor, was delighted that the events surrounding the start-up of Roanoke service fell on Monday and Tuesday, my rest days, thus, I made it a point to be present at the start-up functions, and with the help of former Blue Ridge Chapter members, Vic and Becky Stone, I was able to accomplish more than I had expected to.

To celebrate the return of passenger rail an inaugural train was scheduled to arrive in Roanoke at noon on October 30 the day before service started. The train, one unit and five cars, including Amtrak's office car #10001, the Beech Grove, arrived in Lynchburg very late on Sunday, Oct. 29, and was stored in one of the stub tracks in the Amtrak maintenance facility in advance of the festivities on the 30<sup>th</sup>. It just barely fit. Pictured to the right is the inaugural train and the very last Regional train to overnight in Lynchburg.



Early Monday morning I forced myself to get up early so I could stand in the cold on the Fifth Street bridge to capture the departure of the last Lynchburg-originating Regional train, #176 of the 30<sup>th</sup>. That scene is presented below. Shortly after the Regional left town a late Crescent (below right) made its appearance in Lynchburg. The way was clear now for inaugural train movements to begin.



About 9:00 a.m. the inaugural train, which was symbolled 957, backed out of its storage track and eased south stopping behind Kemper Street station. 957, incidentally, was the same number assigned to the little, two-car train which had been operating Monday thru Friday since June 5 to qualify train crews between Lynchburg and Roanoke.

The City of Lynchburg set up a number of chairs and a sound system in preparation for the small ceremony that would take place prior to the departure of the train and its invited guests that would board for the trip to Roanoke. Among the dignitaries on the scene was Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam (right).



The overall mood of the occasion was jovial. After all, passenger rail was returning to Roanoke after a 38-year absence. Amtrak, as you may recall, operated east-west service on the former N&W from March 25, 1975, until Sep. 30, 1979, first as the Mountaineer for the



first two years and then as the Hilltopper. For me, however, it was a rather bittersweet occasion losing Lynchburg as the layover location. For over eight years the folks boarding in Lynchburg had "first crack" at the seats on the train. Since the train originated and terminated here the process of boarding and detraining was rather relaxed. In the morning the train would be spotted behind the station well before departure time meaning passengers had plenty of time to board. A similar situation existed in the evenings. Since there was no schedule beyond Lynchburg people did not have to rush to get off. Oh, and how I enjoyed getting items left on the train back to their owners! However, as I said earlier, the extension to Roanoke was to be the next step in this train's story, and that day had arrived.

The inaugural train left Kemper Street about 10:40 a.m. I left my car parked at the station and joined Vic and Becky in their vehicle and we headed west on US 460 in pursuit of the inaugural. We were able to get ahead of it and captured it screaming through Bedford as seen below left passing under the recently installed "Big Otter" signal cantilever with the 10001 bringing up the rear.



Traffic on 460 going into Roanoke bogged us down considerably and we were barely able to find a place to leave the car (improperly perhaps) long enough to hop out and grab a through-the-fence picture of the train approaching the Roanoke station.

I guess I should clarify the word "station". Roanoke really doesn't have a new Amtrak station, per se, but what they DO have is one HECK of a platform from which to board the train. Roanoke is an unstaffed station, no agent. There is no enclosed area (maybe later, perhaps) in which to wait for the train. The new platform is located at 55 Norfolk Ave., between the glassed-in Market Street Walkway over the railroad and the Virginia Museum of Transportation, and is high-level, meaning the platform is level with the floor of the train cars. In other words, boarding the train in Roanoke will not involve any climbing of steps into the cars. In fact, Roanoke is the only Amtrak stop in the entire Commonwealth of Virginia that features a high-level platform! And, as is seen in the photos below, a serious canopy was constructed to keep waiting passengers out of the rain.



As was done in Lynchburg many representatives from the railroads and government made speeches to a large crowd of onlookers welcoming the new service in Roanoke. The train was then opened up to the public for walk-through tours of the equipment.

Vic, Becky and I left the train and enjoyed a late lunch at the Great 611 Steak House. Good food, great salad bar and lots of interesting railroad memorabilia decorating the interior. And, after that we headed to accommodations at the Hotel Roanoke for a nap. Vic and Becky, by the way, had booked a room with a (RR) view (seen right)!

All three of us had planned to ride the first revenue train out of Roanoke on the 31st. Having ridden the very first Smartway bus to Lynchburg on July 19, 2011, I had hoped to ride the very last one to operate. After a brilliant eureka on Vic's part and little brainstorming afterwards altering the Stones' October 31 itinerary, a plan was concocted. Vic and I took his vehicle back to Lynchburg in time to catch the Smartway back to Roanoke. We left Roanoke a few minutes before the inaugural train prepared to make its departure to deadhead back to Washington. We were able to listen to the train make its moves turning on the wye just east of the platform via the broadcastify.com Roanoke railroad feed.



We arrived at Kemper Street a few minutes before the southbound Regional, train #171, arrived. This train, after unloading its passengers, would not be coming back to Kemper Street. Instead, it continued on to Roanoke empty where it would be serviced there and would represent first revenue #176 originating from Roanoke Tuesday morning. #171 met the deadheading inaugural train at Forest.

The van was left at Kemper Street and the two of us along with many others from the train rode the Smartway back to its Civic Center stop. The ride allowed a little more nap time for me and we arrived a bit ahead of schedule. Mission accomplished! I was the last person to exit the last bus. After making a trek across the parking lot to the McDonald's on Williamson Rd. we headed back to the Hotel for a late, fast-food dinner and bedded down for the night.

5 a.m. came quickly enough and we all got ready to head over to the platform ahead of the train's 6:19 a.m. departure (Why they can't just make it an even 6:20 is beyond me.) We left the hotel at 6 a.m. Many people had already gathered on the platform for the train. I would estimate the crowd to be at 150.



It's an easy stroll across the Market Street Walkway from the Hotel Roanoke to the Amtrak platform. The three of us lingered there above the railroad tracks and watched the Regional's reverse move below us from its service facility on Albemarle Ave. located on the Winston-Salem line about 1/2 mile away from the platform.



So the three of us settled in for our ride. It was a smooth ride, very nice, but dark until we approached Kinney Yard in Lynchburg. I would get off in Lynchburg, retrieve my car and go home for some well-needed rest (Monday had been a long day). Becky, too, would get off the train in Lynchburg to pick up the van left there the night before. Vic would remain on the train all the way to Washington on his way back to Nebraska.



Several recognizable people were on the train. Among them was my former colleague, retired Amtrak agent Tommy Gilbert and his Mrs. We arrived Lynchburg close to on time and a number of folks ended their trip here. The Roanoke Chapter, NRHS, had chartered a bus to get first-riders back home, and I guess about 30 individuals took advantage of that.

So, the Roanoke start-up Amtrak adventure came to an end. Life at the Lynchburg station is a bit different now. I'm trying to get used to the quiet surrounding Kemper Street. The yard, which had been especially busy this past summer, is now barren. It's sad in a way not seeing the Regional sitting in its storage track nightly with all the activity that accompanied it, but that's the new LYH normal now. Activity could return if rumors are true about a second Regional coming to Lynchburg, one that would arrive in the morning and leave in the afternoon, but that will be the subject of discussion at a later time if it appears it will come to pass.

Your Editor and Vic Stone at RNK on Day 1.



Vic videos the N&W Woodall Rd. station



Two selections from Wayland Moore's November slide presentation are presented here for your consideration. Early Amtrak in Charlottesville top, and Sweet Briar, VA, station below.



Two items of interest in one photo:  
Oct. 11. Loram rail grinder and NS research car 32 behind Kemper Street Station. The research car made a trip to New York and back and then spent about a week stored at Kemper Street before being moved to Roanoke (G. Harper)



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**Annual Christmas Banquet Dec. 2, 2017. Contact Norris now!**  
**Lynchburg Rail Day 2018. 40th year! Saturday, August 11, 2018.**