



# BLUE RIDGE DISPATCHER

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An interesting program is planned for the September meeting of the Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS. Gary Quale will present a show of slides taken by the late Ralph Yoder. You can be sure some highly unusual images will be included. See you there! Pictured above is Ralph, your Editor's six-year old son Taylor and a passing CSX coal train taken on Hydro St. in March 1991.

**Wednesday, September 11, 2013. 6:00 p.m.**  
**Charley's Restaurant. 707 Graves Mill Rd. Lynchburg, VA.**

**BLUE RIDGE PICNIC REMINDER!**  
**The Chapter's annual picnic in Altavista takes place**  
**Sunday, September 15. Details inside.**



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



**Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS.  
Minutes of Meeting  
August 14, 2013**

President Rick Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. at Charley's Restaurant and welcomed 22 members and 3 guests, including Fred Terry, Tayler Johnson and Dorr Tucker. Condolences were offered to Warren Middleton for the loss of his daughter. Minutes of the July meeting were approved as distributed. Rick read the Treasurer's report in John Tanner's absence.

Lynchburg Rail Day was a success again this year and thanks were offered to everyone who helped. Responses from vendors were positive and the chapter has leased the Ruritan Hall for 2014. Paid attendance was 359, chapter members totaled 32, vendors: 38 and 11 N Trak Club members, for a total of 440 attending the show. The committee recommended the following contributions from this year's proceeds: \$1,500 to VMT for their 611 project, \$250 each for the N&WHS Archives Project, C&OHS, Roanoke Chapter Virginian Station project and the Friends of High Bridge. Motion was made by Earl Guthrow, seconded by Dale Diacont, passed without dissent.

Under old business Rick reported that the July Fun Meeting was attended by 12 members and 7 visitors from Charlottesville to hear Travis Koshko, a member of the Rivanna Chapter, present a program on weather and the railroads. The Wreck of Old 97 watercolor was on sale and Rick announced that Tex Carter would lead a tour of the Franklin and Pittsylvania right of way on Saturday, October 26, starting at 9 a.m. in Gretna. The chapter picnic is scheduled on Sunday, September 15 at the pavilion in Altavista's River Park.

Fred Terry announced that volunteers are needed for the Old Dominion Chapter excursions on the Buckingham Branch on October 5, 12 and 19; 9:30 to 1:30 and for the Santa train in December. Rick announced that the September meeting program will be presented by Rick Dash-2, substituting for Charlie Long who is tending his injured son. Jim Overholser announced that the Roanoke Chapter excursion scheduled on October 12 has been cancelled.

There were no reports and the evening's program was presented by member Dale Diacont featuring his photographs from a recent trip to Colorado as well as current CSX motive power. Norris Deyerle won the 50/50.

Meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

Thomas G. Ledford, Secretary

**Yours for the asking!** Ralph Yoder's collection of bound volumes of Trains and Model Railroader magazines. Trains volumes 8 (1947-48) through 56 (1996). Model Railroader volumes 1 (1934), and 13 (1946) through 63 (1996). Additional loose issues before and after the bound volume years with Kalmbach binders also available. Call Gary Quale at 434 384 6308 or email at [gquale@comcast.net](mailto:gquale@comcast.net) .

## **That Last Run by Dale Diacont (retired)**

In a scene from Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, a world-class barbershop quartet asks their listeners in precise four part harmony "where is the good in goodbye." Goodbyes are indeed difficult and long term relationships aren't easily broken. With such foreboding mingling with the humidity of another muggy August evening in Florence, South Carolina, the stage was set for that last run to Richmond, VA aboard CSX Train Q03430. This particular train would conclude forty-three years, two months and five days of working for the railroad. Well over forty-two of those years were as a locomotive engineer.



Dale on the job with a month left to go.  
Selma, NC. (Lee Hawkins)

Thursday afternoon's August 29<sup>th</sup> train from Richmond to Florence was nothing short of a gift. For reasons unknown to the crew, the Orlando block of traffic had been placed on the empty Tropicana train which left us with a scant nineteen cars. With three 4,000 horsepower locomotives leading the way, the train slide-ruled out to be just over 4, 100 feet long. I thought I was back on the *Orange Blossom Special* with an insane horsepower to tons ratio. Including a photo stop-by at MP A-77, running time to Florence was a very impressive five hours and thirty-five minutes. Train Q03129 exhibited all the characteristics of a stick-shift automobile!

In contrast, Friday night's final run on Q03430 was a journey aboard a lumbering giant. We had the same three locomotives from the previous day's trip but they were coupled to forty-four cars that measured 8,540 feet in total length. Our on duty time in Florence was 2359 hrs. Official CSX time and, when we reported for duty, our train was just out of Charleston with Amtrak Auto-Train No. 52 in hot pursuit. Conductor John Frazier obtained our paperwork from the yardmaster in Florence and we began to plot our course for the run to Richmond.

Our train arrived at Florence a few ticks before one o'clock and Train Dispatcher John Star promised us a good ride home. Auto-Train was waiting behind us at South Florence when we pulled at 0100 hrs. It should be noted that Auto-Train fuels its engines, unloads its trash, swaps crews and smokes cigarettes on the concourse during the station stop at Florence. By the time they got the show on the road, I'd cleared the Pee Dee River bridge and was standing on the gas. With a twenty minute jump, I knew we could stay ahead of Amtrak Train No. 52 to Rocky Mount. Before leaving Florence, I'd scheduled an unofficial stop in Rocky Mount to say a few goodbyes.

Train Dispatcher Star looped the Auto-Train around us while final farewells were being said and, all of a sudden, I wasn't in any particular hurry to finish off the next 130 miles of the trip. The train ran amazingly well and rolled better than most but, since we weren't being chased, all of the urgency had gone out of the equation. I found myself drifting instead of driving, trying my best to postpone the inevitable. After observing a 40MPH slow order over a bridge at Stony Creek, VA, I never got above forty for the remainder of the trip. Early as we were, we were still sufficiently ahead of the Amtrak train from Norfolk to lead the way.

Crossing Jahnke Road in Richmond at MP A-1.6 one last time at 0725 hours, it dawned on me that I'll never blow the whistle for another road crossing. After another mile and a half, we crossed the Belt Line Bridge over the James River with the sun rising over Richmond's skyline to the east. Rolling along at 40MPH, it was mostly uphill to Richmond's Acca Yard but I never opened the throttle again. I let gravity do the work and the train rolled to a stop at AY Tower at 0735.

Humbled to say the very least, a crowd of a dozen well wishers with three posters had gathered to greet me at the conclusion of that final run. Lifelong friend Robert Richardson of Henderson, NC and former RF&P train dispatcher Stanley Short had organized the party. To my absolute astonishment, Wharton G. Separk, III; a retired train dispatcher from Raleigh, drove up to Richmond for the occasion. Retired Amtrak Engineer Doug Riddell and his wife Sandy were responsible for two of the posters that had been made. What a way to leave!



Dale displaying two of the posters created for him commemorating his last run. (photos courtesy Bill Whitbeck)

It's impossible to thank all responsible for a career that stretched over four decades. Much help and guidance have surely leveled the path en route to that last run. The most pleasing aspect of the entire journey is that it was made without the first fatality. Worst of all is that when I now see a train go by, I feel like an "outsider." With more stories to write and photographs to take, it's a feeling I can get used to.

Ed. Note - Dale is a Blue Ridge Chapter member, prolific photographer and author. We all congratulate Dale on the occasion of his recent retirement.

**Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS 2013 Calendar of Events  
55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Blue Ridge Chapter  
A Virginia's Rail Heritage Region Partner  
Compiled by Norris Deyerle,  
Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS Chairman of Virginia's Rail Heritage Region Partners**

**Newly updated or added events since last month printed in "Bold Italics".**

Notice: I urge our friends with the other railway historical groups and museums to take advantage of [www.trainfinder.com](http://www.trainfinder.com) or [www.trains.com](http://www.trains.com). There is no cost to promote your train show on these websites. It's simple to add your event to their website and your event approval is fast and efficient. This is a website that will help us all get the word out about our events!

Are you interested in learning more about the historic Norfolk And Western Railway "High Bridge" in Farmville, Va? Please check out the following links for more info:

Friends of High Bridge Trail:

<https://sites.google.com/site/friendsofhighbridgetrail/>

High Bridge Trail State Park:

[http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state\\_parks/hig.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/hig.shtml)

<http://www.virginia.org/Listings/OutdoorsAndSports/HighBridgeTrailStatePark/>

Historical USGS Topographical Maps: A great research tool for locating abandoned railroad lines, etc.

<http://nationalmap.gov/historical/>

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation – Free Official State of Virginia Railroad Map, 600 East Main Street, Richmond, Va. 23219

Phone: 804-786-4440

[www.drpt.virginia.gov](http://www.drpt.virginia.gov)

Tennessee Valley Railroad/Norfolk Southern 21st Century Steam Train Excursion Schedule Info:

<http://www.tvrail.com/pages/21st-century-steam> Note: Find more railroad related info on other websites at the end of this Calendar Of Events.

### September 2013:

**09-11-13: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Gary Quale will present images from the collection of Ralph Yoder.**

09-13-14-13: {Friday & Saturday} The Mid-Atlantic Railroad Prototype Modelers Meet, Stafford, Va. Info: <http://www.marpm.org>

**09-13-15-13: {Friday – Sunday} Great Smoky Mountains “Railfest 2013”, NRHS members were mailed a specially priced package for this weekend. Info: Sarah Conley Pressley, Marketing Manager, 828-488-7024 or 800-872-4681 ext. 7024, [www.gsmr.com](http://www.gsmr.com)**

**09-15-13: {Sunday} BRC, NRHS Summer Picnic, English Park, Altavista Va., The BRC has the large picnic pavilion reserved from Noon till 4:00 pm. We usually finish up around 2:00 pm or so. We usually start eating around 12:45 pm or earlier if everyone that has registered is there. Prior registration is encouraged since the fried chicken is ordered well in advance. Everyone is asked to bring a covered dish or dessert to share with others. If you have a large family or bring several guests please consider this when you bring your portions to share. The BRC will supply the fried chicken and the beverages. Please contact me, Norris Deyerle, by phone or email no later than Thursday morning Sept. 12, 2013 and give me your headcount. Remember, if you're reading this email you and your guests are invited. My phone number is 434-237-4912 and my email address is [railcow@msn.com](mailto:railcow@msn.com). We're hoping for a large turnout. I hope that you can join us. We always have a great time! The more the merrier!**

09-18-22-13: {Wednesday-Sunday} NRHS 2013 Alaska Convention, Info: [www.nrhs.com](http://www.nrhs.com)

09-25-13: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS “Fun Meeting”

**09-28-13: {Sunday} Virginia Museum Of Transportation, “Smithsonian Museum Day”, Download a ticket for free admission to the VMT or 1400 other museums throughout the United States at [smithsonianmag.com/museumday](http://smithsonianmag.com/museumday)**

### October 2013:

10-09-13: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Kurt Reisweber's program titled “Westward the Amfleet” featuring Kurt's March, 2012 trip out west.

10-17-19-13: {Thursday – Saturday} Eastern Division Train Collectors Association York Fall Meet, York, Pa. Info: [www.easterntca.org](http://www.easterntca.org)

### November 2013:

11-03-13 {Sunday} 36<sup>th</sup> Gaithersburg Railroadiana & Transportation Show, Montgomery County Fairgrounds, Gaithersburg, MD Info: [www.gserr.com](http://www.gserr.com)

11-9 & 10-13: 25<sup>th</sup> Annual ‘13 Railfest Model Train Show, Pocahontas Chapter, NRHS, Bluefield Youth Center, 1780 Stadium Drive, Next To Mitchell Stadium, Bluefield, WV. Saturday: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm, Sunday: 12:00 Noon – 5:00 pm, Admission: \$5.00 Per Person, \$10.00 Per Family, Info: {304} 431-2593 or {304} 327-0026. Facebook: Pocahontas NR HS

11-9 & 10-13: {Saturday & Sunday} First Frost Train Show, Allentown Fairgrounds Ag Hall, Allentown, Pa. Info: [www.allentowntrainmeet.com](http://www.allentowntrainmeet.com)

11-13-13: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Wayland Moore program

11-27-13: {Wednesday} Attention! No “Fun Meeting” due to Thanksgiving Holiday

## December 2013:

12-07-13: {Saturday} BRC, NRHS Annual Christmas Banquet, Former Southern Railway Station, Altavista, Va.

**12-07 & 12-08-13 {Saturday & Sunday} VMT "Candy Cane Express", Train rides, Santa, crafts and more! Reduced admission. Activities for the entire family! Info: [www.vmt.org](http://www.vmt.org).**

12-11-13: {Wednesday} BRC, NRHS Monthly Meeting, Rick "Dash 2" Johnson program

12-21-13: {Saturday} BRC, NRHS Annual "Kemper Street Station Holiday Gathering"

Railroad Related Events Information: Visit: [www.varailheritage.org](http://www.varailheritage.org), [www.vmt.org](http://www.vmt.org), [www.linkmuseum.org](http://www.linkmuseum.org), [www.nctrans.org](http://www.nctrans.org), [www.roanokenrhs.org](http://www.roanokenrhs.org), [www.dcnrhs.org](http://www.dcnrhs.org), [www.odcnrhs.org](http://www.odcnrhs.org), [www.nwhs.org](http://www.nwhs.org), [www.cohs.org](http://www.cohs.org), [www.csxthsociety.org](http://www.csxthsociety.org), [www.thecrhs.org](http://www.thecrhs.org), [www.theruralretreatdepot.com](http://www.theruralretreatdepot.com), [www.srha.org](http://www.srha.org), [www.rfandp.org](http://www.rfandp.org), [www.vatraincollectors.com](http://www.vatraincollectors.com), [www.traincollectors.org](http://www.traincollectors.org), [www.railroadcollectors.org](http://www.railroadcollectors.org), [www.nhvry.org](http://www.nhvry.org), [www.norfolksouthernrhs.org](http://www.norfolksouthernrhs.org), [www.RailServe.com](http://www.RailServe.com), [www.gsmr.com](http://www.gsmr.com), [www.trains.com](http://www.trains.com), [www.TrainFinder.com](http://www.TrainFinder.com), [www.gserr.com](http://www.gserr.com), [www.wqshow.com](http://www.wqshow.com), [www.drpt.virginia.gov](http://www.drpt.virginia.gov)

Blue Ridge Chapter, NRHS Website: [www.blueridgenrhs.org](http://www.blueridgenrhs.org)

Norfolk Southern/TVRM Steam Excursion Website: <http://www.21stcenturysteam.com> OR <http://www.tvrail.com/pages/21st-century-steam>

Steam Train Events in the United States and Canada: [www.diary.svsfilm.com](http://www.diary.svsfilm.com)

Steam Locomotive Locations: [www.steamlocomotive.com](http://www.steamlocomotive.com)

Railroad Historical Information and Related Photos: [www.hawkinsrails.net](http://www.hawkinsrails.net)

Key Lock & Lantern Railroad History and Preservation Organization, [www.klnl.org](http://www.klnl.org)

Danville & Western Ry. Website: Railway operated in Southwestern Virginia between Danville and Stuart. <http://southern-railway.railfan.net/dw/>

Trains & Travel International: [www.traintrips.biz](http://www.traintrips.biz)

Additional links to other NRHS Chapters, Railroad Historical Societies and Museums available at [www.blueridgenrhs.org](http://www.blueridgenrhs.org)

Virginia Museum Of Transportation Rail Cam: <http://www.nwhs.org/cam/vmt>

Roanoke, Va. Rail Cam: <http://128.173.197.94:443/RRCmov>

## SIGHTINGS

Aug . 29 - Amtrak's Veterans commemorative unit 42 spotted trailing on train #19. (G. Harper, Skip Hansberry) Photo by Roy Evans.



Sep. 3 - NS New York Central unit 1066 caught leading NS train 12R leaving Lynchburg. Seen from Bedford Ave. (G. Harper. Skip Hansberry, Wayland Moore)



Sep. 7 -- NS PRR heritage unit 8102 spotted leading NS train 189.  
(Lee Hawkins, Norris Deyerle) photos by Lee Hawkins



### **Claudius Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel Foundation get a huge boost!**



The mission of the Claudius Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel Foundation is the restoration and preservation of the Claudius Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel as a valuable historical asset and recreational destination for both Nelson and Augusta counties in Virginia. The tunnel project will incorporate a trailway through the restored tunnel, accessible from both sides by trail hikers, walkers and bicyclists, linking to existing trail systems.

Constructed between 1850 and 1858, the Blue Ridge Tunnel project was led by the brilliant French Engineer Claudius Crozet (1789-1864). The tunnel was a major engineering feat, employing mostly Irish laborers and African-American slaves simultaneously excavating the tunnel from each end using only hand drills and black powder for a distance of nearly 1 mile (4,273 linear ft.) It was the longest tunnel in America at the time of its completion, and allowed safe Westward expansion from the Eastern part of the United States.

The Blue Ridge Tunnel is located in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains at Rockfish Gap. The eastern entrance is in Afton, in Nelson County, and the western entrance is in Augusta County near Waynesboro. (near Interstate 64, Route 250, the Blue Ridge Parkway, Skyline Drive and the Appalachian Trail.)

The Blue Ridge Tunnel Project has been in the works for about 12 years, but with a \$749,149 award from the Virginia Department of Transportation's Commonwealth Transportation Board, the first phase of restoration has gone from a possibility to a certainty.

The first phase, starting as soon as this fall, will include construction of a parking lot near Afton Depot. The foundation is finishing negotiations to acquire an extra .93-acre parcel adjacent to the .67-acre plot the county already owns on the eastern end of the tunnel, said Allen Hale, president of the Claudius Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel Foundation.

The first phase also will include installing a drainage system and creating a roughly 3,400-foot walking trail from Afton Depot to the east entrance of the tunnel.

Eventually, Hale said, a small visitor center could be built near the start of the trail. But that remains tentative because currently there are no funds for an attendant.

The trail will be accessible to hikers and bicyclists and eventually would link to existing trail systems in the area.

Claudius Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel Foundation, P.O. Box 336, Lovingston, VA 22949. The Claudius Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel Foundation is a 501(c)(3) foundation, and tax deductible contributions are gladly accepted.

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