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## **Northstar Chapter National Railway Historical Society**

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**Position available for you!**

### **Presidents Corner**

Our biggest project to date, the 2004 NRHS National convention is coming along nicely. The committee has been working very hard planning the convention. John Goodman has been contacting the various railroads and excursion operators about the various mainline excursions we hope to operate. Marty Swan has worked with the Hilton Hotel to arrange for hotel, banquet and meeting space. Dick Fish has been working on the order/ticketing system. This will be ready to accept pre-registrations by late spring and be complete by this fall. Dick has also been planning a day long tour of three MTM sites. Russ Isbrandt has been talking to the various bus companies that will provide ground transportation to and from the hotel and the various trips and activities. Russ is also working closely with Dick Fish on the MTM Tours. Jim George is working on the financial side of this event by investigating what banks are willing to work with us to accept credit cards and opening a separate checking account to pay the bills. Jim has also worked on a preliminary budget for this convention, and I must say that the dollar amounts are staggering!

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### **Northstar Chapter Membership Information**

If you, or anyone you know, is interested in becoming a member of the chapter, please invite them to attend a meeting. Year 2003 Northstar Chapter membership fees are \$32 per year for an individual, or \$34 per year for a family membership, and this includes national dues. Please send dues payments to Joe Fishbien, Treasurer Northstar Chapter, 1092 Humboldt Av, West St. Paul MN 55118.

The **March Northstar Chapter meeting** will be **7:00 PM, February 15th 2003**, at the Saint Paul Firefighters training facility.

**February Program:** Robert Koetz will present a video of railroading around Chicago in the 1940's and the 1950's  
See you there!

## **My Exciting Week As A Ticket Agent**

I was going to the U of Nebraska and one day during the summer 1962 break the chief ticket agent asked me, since I knew so much about passenger trains, etc, if I would like to work the extra board during the summer. This sounded great to me. The Q's idea of training was for me to work for free for a week learning how to write a ticket, how to figure fares using the tariffs (many of which had been issued in 1950 or before where you had to use Ex Parte increase tables to bring a rate up to the current level). Also found out that there wasn't just a simple tariff, we had Southern Passenger Association tariffs, Eastern tariffs etc etc etc. plus individual railroad tariffs. Luckily there were cheat sheets to many many locations from Lincoln. The Lincoln Depot worked as follows 7:00 am to 4:00 pm 3 people, 4:00 pm to midnight 3 people, midnight to 7:00 am one person.(those hours don't add up but you get the idea)

So the big day comes, the midnight shift guy goes on vacation and I take his place. The eastbound Denver Z goes through at about 12:15 am, the westbound CZ goes through at about 12:25 am and the local to Billings leaves at about 12.50 am. So the afternoon shift closes their windows, I got my money, and I am already to start. It is Friday night (really Sat. morning). I throw open my window at midnight----and I see a line of people that looked like they wound through the depot twice, went out the door and were backed up to the U of N football stadium. Panic! I pushed the Panic button BIG TIME. I sold people round trip tickets and gave them one way coupons and the reverse sold people one way tickets with roundtrip coupons. I sold some nuns tickets to McCook and kept the tickets and gave them the agents coupons. Somebody wanted a ticket to some place on the Southern that was not included in our cheat sheet so I was frantically trying to figure out the fare. I finally just used the cheat sheet point that was closest to where they were going. I heard the trains come roaring in. I looked out and there seemed to be twice as many people. Somebody wanted to go to St.Louis a couple of days from now so I asked him if he would mind stepping aside so I could take care of people leaving that night NO he wanted his ticket so I got revenge by routing him via Wabash. The better connection was via MoPac, most of the time the connection was late enough so that you missed the morning City of Kansas City on the Wabash.

Then this girl comes up and wants to pay by check. Checks back then were big NoNo's-exception if they were a student at the U and had the student ID card I could take the check at the company's risk. I forgot to ask her if she was a student and she didn't offer the information so I refused the check. She was desperate, she had to get home. She was crying. Meanwhile the Conductors of the DZ and CZ came in, saw the line and called out that if you knew what your space was to come on out to the train and buy it on board a few did (but this screwed up my transfer of unsold space to Omaha, since I had "no shows" I transferred that space but since they had bought their ticket on board, duplicates. occurred.) Meanwhile the girl comes back and wants me to leave the ticket office and go across the lobby and talk to her father on the phone. I couldn't do that and refused. Crying again. Finally the CZ and DZ leave and the girl comes up with money that she got from somewhere to get her ticket to Billings. She wanted a sleeper to Alliance and then a coach beyond. By this time my mind was numb and I totally forgot how to figure a split ticket (sleeper part way, coach the rest). I charged her some figure, which was too high. The phone is ringing Omaha wants unassigned space on the DZ, the phone rings, Hastings wants the unassigned space on the CZ. God knows what unassigned space was left with the total mess I had but I tried my best.

The long and short of it, I held the honor, and maybe I still do, of being the single employee with the most write ups, (complaints) for one night's work in the history of the office. The biggest complainer was the father of the girl who did turn out to be a U of N student. Rage is an insufficient word to describe what he was feeling. He wanted me to be beheaded and have my head put on a pike at the entrance to the station for all to see. Of course he turns out to be an important shipper on the Q

For the balance of the week, they had one of the agents that was supposed to go off duty at midnight work an hour of overtime to 1:00 until the rush was over. The only other trains I had was the CZ eastbound and the westbound DZ and few people rode it from Lincoln (too many better options than catching a 2:30am or 4:00 am train out. My job was also to report all of the ticket sales and the type of ticket used (preprinted coupons (looking like movie theater tickets), the brand new book tickets

etc) and how much money was collected to each destination. I screwed that up that night also and it had to be done over. Actually the rest of the week went smoother. There never were that many people waiting in line, and with "Big Jim" helping things went a lot smoother. But for some reason or another I was never called to work another relief job! In hindsight they should never have left a first day rookie alone with the rush coming in. On either day shift there was help. The only outbound trains on the morning shift was the train to Omaha with connections to KC and the Nebr. Z. The afternoon shift only had a mail train and the Ak-Sar-Ben Zephyr.

One good thing came out of this. When the midnight guy got back and was told what happened he blew up. He had been telling them for years he needed some help. So they abolished one of the 4 to midnight jobs and established it as a 5:00 to 1:00 am job . That is why it only lasted one week

For those not familiar with railroad terms an Ex Parte increase is a general, usually percentage, increase to apply to existing rates. Some of those passenger tariffs were so old that you had to apply 4 or 5 Ex Parte increase rates to the published rate to get the rate to charge the customer--and of course there were exceptions to the increases. It's funny how life goes in a circle. In my later railroad career for the GN I was in responsible for getting those Ex Parte increases approved by the ICC and the various State Commissions on freight traffic.

## **Presidents Corner – Continued from Page 1**

We will be promoting our convention heavily in Baltimore and the Fall 2003 Board of Directors meeting and also the Spring 2004 BoD meeting. If you would like to have a part in this convention, please contact me by e-mail (preferred) [Dan@Meyer.net](mailto:Dan@Meyer.net) or by telephone 763-784-8835. We have a lot to do, and not very much time. If you want to have a role in this convention, there are plenty of tasks to do and we could sure use your help.

As for other activities that I hope to enjoy this summer, here are a few things I've been dreaming about:

I hope we can have a picnic trackside this summer. The Wayzata Depot would be a wonderful place to spend the afternoon, as would a number of other places in the area.

Another activity I've been hoping the chapter would do is a visit to the Iowa Trolley Park in Clear Lake, Iowa. This would be an easy day-trip to the Mason City – Clear Lake area. We could meet the Iowa Chapter there, and also invite anyone that is an NRHS member (or just a railfan) to come along as well.

Finally, I hope that we could arrange with one of the private car owners in the twin city area to have a meeting on their car. This would not be a train ride, but I would enjoy having a hamburger from the grill, and then seeing some vintage slides while taking in the ambiance of a railroad car.

Please let me know what group activity you would like the chapter to organize this year.

Finally, we need an editor for the Northstar News. I was editor for several years until I was elected President and Lauren took over. Lauren did a wonderful job, but was unable to continue because of the demands of college. Glen Holmberg has been doing a fine job as an interim editor, but has no desire to continue indefinitely. Unless someone comes forward and volunteers to be the editor, the Northstar News may cease publication. It doesn't take a lot of computer hardware or software to produce the Northstar News. If you have a computer that has Microsoft Word, you have all you need to become editor. An internet connection, E-mail and a printer helps in the process, but they are by no means absolutely necessary to do the job. Also, the Chapter owns an HP DeskJet 672C color printer that the editor can keep at their home to help them produce the Northstar News. If you have a computer, please consider becoming the editor of the Northstar News. We really need your help.

See you all Saturday evening!

-- Dan Meyer

## Northstar Chapter NRHS January Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order by chapter president Dan Meyer at 7:09 p.m. in the St. Paul Fire Department Training Center. Secretary Dave Norman was not present at the start of the meeting, so Cy Svobodny took the minutes until Dave arrived. A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2002 meeting, as published in the December 2002 issue of the Northstar News.

National Director Marty Swan reported that he is planning to attend the spring national Board of Directors meeting. Treasurer Joe Fishbein was not present to give a report. Trip Director John Goodman was out of town, attending the meeting of the RPCA. Dan Meyer reported there was an error in the amount of the dues listed in the January issue of Northstar News. The correct amount for 2003 should be \$32/\$34 for individual/family membership.

We are looking for a new editor - anyone interested should contact Dan. One of the activities suggested to increase chapter interest and activity was a rail photo contest or photo clinic. Anyone interested in helping with that project should contact Dan. A question was asked about whether there would be any kind of junior event in conjunction with our 2004 national convention.

New Business - There will be a chapter Board of Directors meeting Sunday afternoon, January 19, at 3 p.m. in the meeting room at the Amtrak station. The 2002 Holiday Party had a small turnout of only 40 people. Do we want to move the 2003 party to a different location? Should we go ahead and make a reservation for Sunday, December 7th? It was suggested that we hold off on this decision. Pre-registration forms are now out for the 2003 national convention in Baltimore. If people are planning to go, they should send in their form ASAP. Glen Holmberg's employer donated 10 reams of paper to the chapter. A question was asked about the Northstar News - two issues were mailed out in one envelope, plus the membership renewal form was enclosed for those didn't get theirs at the holiday party. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made, seconded, and carried at 7:25 p.m. A door prize drawing was held. Guests were welcomed.

The program commemorating the 40th anniversary of the abandonment of the Chicago, North Shore, Milwaukee Railroad, was presented by Russ Isbrandt. Russ gave us a virtual trip over the line in the form of a slide show on video, with authentic recorded sounds.

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