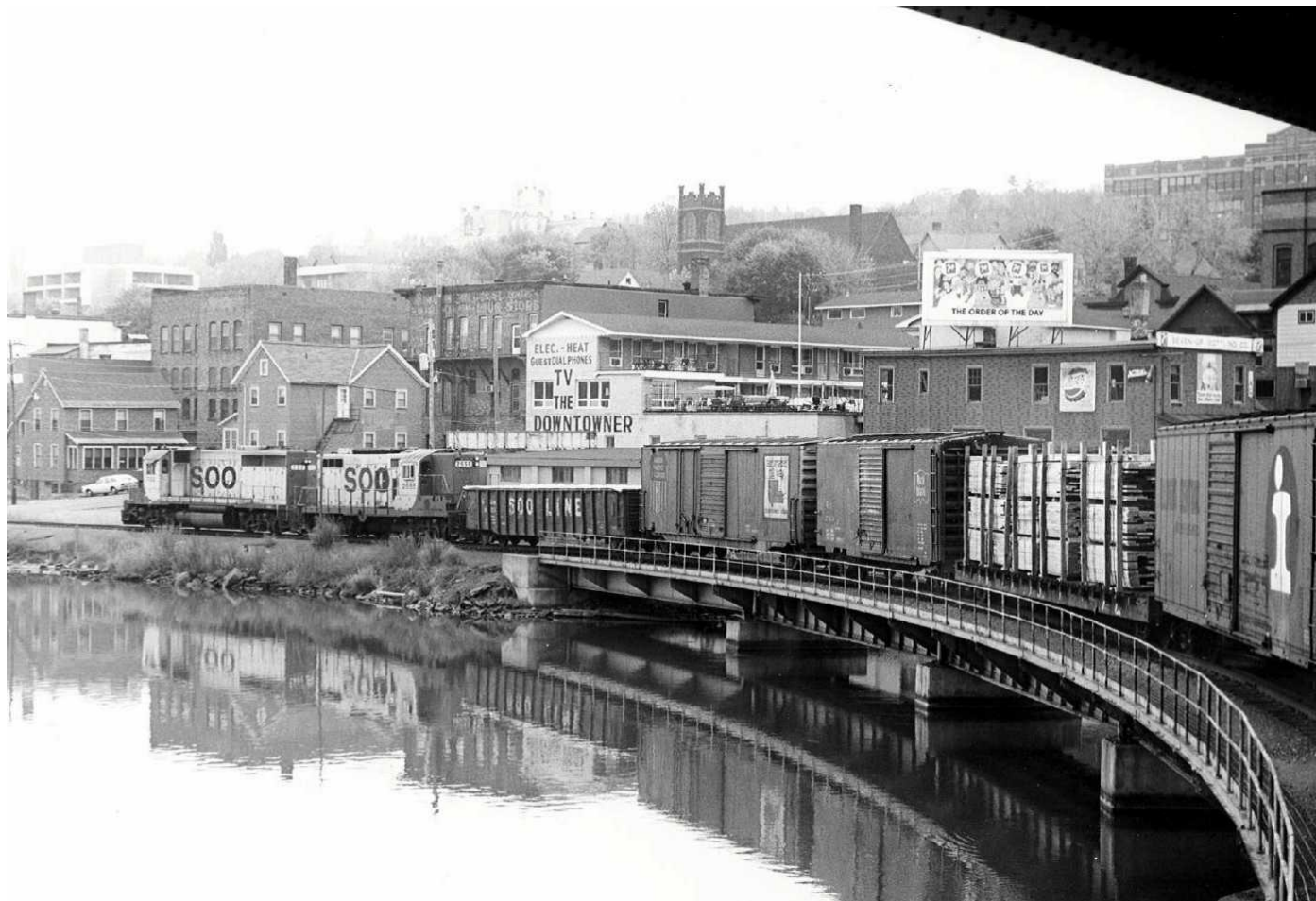




NORTHSTAR NEWS

How I Got to be a Railfan By Joe Fishbein



Soo Line GP40 732 and GP9 2555 leading the Saturday wayfreight south across the Portage Lake lift bridge back into Houghton, Michigan. I was riding the caboose that day. The dark "wedge" in the upper right corner is the girder for the upper deck of the lift span. 10/9/1976. Photo by Joe Fishbein

Inside this issue

Officer Contact List	p.2
The President's Page	p.2
Feature Article	p.3
January Meeting Minutes	p.5
Celebration Banquet Announcement	p.6
Train Name Game	p.6

Meeting Notice

The next meeting of the Northstar Chapter will be at 7PM February 19th at the St. Paul Fire Department Training Center, 1695 Energy Park Drive, St. Paul (Snelling and Energy Park Drive just east of Midway Stadium). The program will be your editor. We'll continue the march through his boxes of slides in chronological order beginning with a trip to Seattle, Vancouver, Portland, San Francisco and a ride on the California Western through the redwoods. You'll see the *North Coast Limited*, *Cascade* and *California Zephyr* among other things. A chase of the NKP 759 and a ride on the South Shore Line to downtown South Bend are also included.



Northstar Chapter Officers

Board of Directors

President	H. Martin Swan	Email: HMSwan@webtv.net	Phone: 612-961-1684
Vice President	Mark Braun	Email: mkbraun@hutchtel.net	Phone: 320-587-2279
Past President	Bill Herzog	Email: herzogminn@aol.com	Phone: 952-470-4021
National Director	Doug Johnson	Email: djoh322721@aol.com	Phone: 612-825-6458
Treasurer	Joe Fishbein	Email: jmf@visi.com	Phone: 651-457-1610
Secretary	Dave Norman	Email: nevad11@hotmail.com	Phone: 612-729-2428
Trustee	Dennis Loudon	Email: bnsf@comcast.net	Phone: 651-698-8559

Staff

Program Chairman	John Goodman	Email: good6012@amtrak.com	
Newsletter Editor	Russ Isbrandt	Email: risbrandt@comcast.net	Phone: 651-426-1156
Webmaster	Dan Meyer	Website: www.northstar-nrhs.org	

Note: Consult the website for any announcements regarding Chapter activities including cancellation of meeting for any reason including weather.

Membership Information

Dues are \$32 (this includes \$20 National dues and \$12 Northstar Chapter dues). Family memberships are \$3 additional. If you want to join, an application is available at <http://www.northstar-nrhs.org/>. Print out the application and send it with a check made out to Northstar Chapter, NRHS to Treasurer, Northstar Chapter NRHS, 1092 Humboldt Ave, West Saint Paul, MN 55118.

The President's Page

It's hard to believe that I have been retired for slightly over 3 years. Retired on Jan. 15, 2002. Prior to that time I was worried about what I would do after retirement. I pictured myself being bored silly with nothing to do other than to play games on the Playstation 2 and watch movies on the DVD. Oh I figured I would go to a movie once a week and down to Treasure Island, perhaps once a month.

Hah! The last movie I saw was the "Day After Tomorrow" last April or May and the last time down to Treasure Island was right after our Convention last July. It never ceases to amaze me how much I have to do—all the time!

Because of other things I had to do, I had planned to write this column next week, but our beloved Editor has been on my rear end to get this to him ASAP. Since I had charged him with getting the Northstar News out the week prior to the

meeting, I'm putting everything aside to write this and I'm not quite sure what is going to come out of my fingers on the keyboard.

We had our first meeting last Jan in the BITTER COLD. I was quite pleased with the large numbers that came to the meeting. We got quite something done that I thought was important including setting up a By-Laws Committee Chairman (Mark Braun) and making some initial comments about what to do with our "new" money. In that regard, The Convention Committee repaid their \$7000 loan to the Chapter with a small amount of interest. While the interest was nice, what will be really nice is that when all is said and done, the Chapter's investment of \$7000 to the Convention Committee will give us a return slightly more than 3 times the original investment. There was risk, if the Convention had gone badly we could have lost that money—as unlikely as that might be, it was still a possibility.

One thing about our meeting, I would appreciate it if the members would maintain a proper business attitude during the business part of the meeting. Please no ex-parte talking. You may talk to your friends before the meeting, during the break and after the meeting but during the meeting is not a good time. There are several reasons for this: (1) it is rude to the people trying to conduct the meeting; (2) it makes it hard for the Secretary to hear what is going on and to make accurate notes; (3) with my bad hearing it becomes difficult for me to distinguish between the legitimate speaker and somebody just yakking away; (4) the meetings will go faster if we stick to the subject; and (5) it is just the right thing to do.

The 2005 Convention in Portland is, believe it or not, fast approaching. As of yet we have no information as to what they plan to do. I do know that several of our members are taking the CZ to California and then either joining or planning to chase *The Pacific Northwest Express* which will run from Sacramento to Portland via the Inside Gateway over the lines of the former GN and WP. Alas, I will not be joining them. I will leave on the Portland section of the Empire Builder on July 5 and then on July 10 take a Talgo up to Seattle and return on the Empire Builder from there. Since I have enough Amtrak Guest Awards points, my roundtrip in a sleeping car will cost me \$0.

The 2006 convention will be in New Philadelphia, Ohio. It is gratifying to be able to report that 2 and possibly 3 members of our Chapter will be part of the Committee that will develop and operate that Convention. John Goodman, will be the Trip Coordinator and Doug Johnson will be the Bus Coordinator. We all know of the excellent trips John has arranged for the Chapter and our Convention and Doug's work ethic and dedication to the job at hand (he is our Convention's Treasurer) means that the 2006 Convention has recruited two excellent people. The Chapter should be very proud. One other Chapter member most likely will be involved, but to the best of my knowledge hasn't accepted the offer made to him at this time, so we will hold that off for another time.

I forgot to mention last month that I am President of another

group, Relaxed Rails. I'm starting my 3rd and final year as President of that group. It is a group of retired railroad people that meet once a month for lunch. This is strictly a social gathering. No dues are collected—but we do ask you to pay a one time fee of a buck or so for a name tag. We have members of all the Twin Cities railroads, as well as those from Conrail, N&W and others who live in the area. There are several members of Northstar Chapter that attend these meetings. If you are retired railroad man, and you would like to come, we meet the third Monday of each month Nickelbys' restaurant near the Maplewood Mall. Lunch is served, buffet style (generally \$11), starting at noon, always a hot meat item and a hot fish item.

Well my fingers are getting sore for this "wing it" version of the President's page. See you all at the meeting.

Marty

How I Got To Be a Railfan By Joe Fishbein

[Note: Much of what follows is taken from "Farewell to an Old Friend," a piece I wrote as a tribute to the Soo Line Railroad shortly after it was absorbed by CP Rail. It was published in the Summer 1994 issue of "The Soo," the magazine of the Soo Line Historical & Technical Society.]

My interest in railroads didn't come about in the usual manner. None of my relatives worked for a railroad, and I didn't grow up watching trains roll past my back yard. I was in college in Houghton, Michigan in the mid-1970s, nearing completion of work on a civil engineering degree, when I first began to pay attention to the red and white locomotives working in the small yard down the hill from where I lived. A friend, Dave Parker, who called himself a "railfan" (whatever that was) would go down there every evening to see which locomotives were in town. I occasionally accompanied him, just to see what the fuss was all about and to satisfy my natural curiosity about things mechanical.

At the time, the Soo had a single job based out of Houghton. On weekdays, they would head south along the former DSS&A line in the morning, working industries along the way and spending most of the day switching the Celotex plant in L'Anse at the foot of Keweenaw Bay. They would make the grueling climb up L'Anse hill to interchange cars at Nestoria, and then head back to Houghton to tie up for the evening. On Saturdays, they headed north across the Portage Canal, working the branch lines to Calumet and Lake Linden.

During our evening visits, I made the acquaintance of Joe Kaufman, the engineer on the Houghton job. He was an old South Shore steam hogger, and the pride he felt in his job was evident from the coat and tie he wore under his coveralls, as well as the way he patiently answered my many questions about the railroad, the engines, and his career on the rails. I was probably a bit of a pest, but he didn't seem to mind.



Joe Kaufman at the controls of Soo Line Geep 407



Crossing the Portage Lake Lift Bridge

On one of those evenings, in April of 1975, Joe came over to where I was standing on the platform, and asked if I had any plans for the following weekend. When I told him I didn't, he said that he had contacted the Trainmaster in Marquette and obtained permission for me to ride along with him the following Saturday.

That gray, rainy morning still fills my mind with vivid images:

The noisy, dirty cab of GP9 number 407 (long since departed from the Soo roster), the clattering of the rails and supporting girders on the Portage Lake lift bridge, the rocking of the box-cars and pulpwood gons on the ancient 60-pound iron, the clacking of relays behind the green electrical cabinet doors, the squealing of flanges on the tight radius of the Calumet wye, Joe patiently explaining the function of the various switches and levers on the control stand, the whistle cord with its well-worn wooden handle, the "psssh-psssh" sound of the pneumatic windshield wipers, and many other details that helped to spark my interest in railroading.

After that wondrous experience, I got to know the crew of the Houghton job quite well, and rode with them fairly often on Saturday mornings. I bought a copy of "Diesel Spotter's Guide" and subscribed to "Extra 2200 South" magazine (A bit more technical than the usual railroad publications, but like I said, I was studying to become an engineer!). I was present at the retirement parties of many crew members, including Joe Kaufman. In retrospect, it's probably a good thing that I didn't develop my interest in trains at the beginning of my college studies, or I might be there still.

I moved to northeast Wisconsin after graduating in 1977, and then made St. Paul my home in 1984. For several years, I was a very active railfan, photographing the unusual and rare power in Green Bay and the surrounding area, as well as taking trips to Colorado, Pennsylvania, Canada and elsewhere. I had pictures published in "Trains", and I became an officer and board member of the Soo Line Historical Society and a local model railroad club. I also did my best to keep Kodak profitable through the purchase of massive amounts of Kodachrome.

Like everything else, though, railroads change over time. Many of the cars and locomotives I rode in and photographed in the 1970s and 1980s have long since been scrapped, the rails to Houghton and beyond were pulled up many years ago, and my friend Joe Kaufman passed away shortly after his retirement. The Soo was absorbed by CP Rail, and the lines in upper Michigan became part of Wisconsin Central, which itself was absorbed by another Canadian giant.

Interests change over time as well. As I became a husband, father and homeowner in the mid-1980s, priorities changed and the railfanning took a back seat to other things. For most of the 1990s, I was active with the MTM at Osceola, becoming certified as brakeman and conductor, and was working towards becoming licensed as a diesel engineer. But that, too, began to interfere with other, more important priorities; I reluctantly dropped my active participation in MTM 4 years ago. Engineer training was an awful lot of fun, but I was never able to complete it and obtain my license.

I am no longer an active railfan, having shot my last train slide around 1998. Where I could once easily tell the subtle difference between a GP38 and a GP38-2, today I'd be lucky to distinguish a GM SD70MAC from a GE AC4400CW. My interest in railroads has shifted more to the historical end, and I remain a long-term member of the SOO, Milwaukee Road and C&NW historical societies (as well as the NRHS, of

course). I've also become an avid collector of RPO (Railway Post Office) postmarks.

Despite my inactivity, a spark of interest still remains. My office is close to the UP (C&NW) main line in Oakdale, and I'll go to the window to see what's going by when I hear the warning horn for the Hadley Avenue crossing. If I'm driving down the highway and see a headlight on a parallel railroad track, I'll pull off to the shoulder and watch the train pass. I may not be standing in the weeds with my camera any more, but I'm enjoying it just the same.

Meeting Minutes From January

Minutes of the January 15, 2005 Membership Meeting of the Northstar Chapter NRHS Chapter

President Marty Swan called the meeting to order at 7:05p.m. in the St. Paul Fire Department Training Center with 19 members and guests present. The normal meeting agenda was suspended for a few minutes. Marty Swan said that he wants people to stick to the subject when discussing things during business meetings. He noted changes on the Board of Directors. Dan Meyer is now off the Board after having most recently served as Immediate Past President. There was a round of applause for him. Dennis Loudon, as Trustee, is new to the Board. There were several changes within the Board. Mark Braun moved from Trustee to Vice President, Doug Johnson moved from Vice President to National Director, and Martin Swan moved from National Director to President. Joe Fishbein, as Treasurer, and Dave Norman, as Secretary, continue as before. Marty also talked about committee heads (or those who hold jobs in the chapter equivalent to committee heads.) Glen Holmberg has been editor of the Northstar News since the December 2003 issue. He has also been Program Director since September 1999. Marty said that Glen has done "yeoman work" in both jobs, and the chapter owes him a great deal of appreciation. Effective with the January 2005 issue, Russ Isbrandt is now editor of the Northstar News. Also effective this month, John Goodman is Program Chairman. The other committee heads include Dan Meyer, Chairman of the Convention Committee (Dan is also Webmaster), John Goodman, Chairman of the Trip Committee and Housing Committee, John Cartwright, Historian, Dennis Loudon, Holiday Banquet, and Bill Herzog, 8327 Restoration Project. Marty said that he feels the talent of the Board's members has not been tapped in a very efficient manner in recent years, so he plans to call at least three and possibly four Board meetings this year to discuss and develop plans for the future of the chapter. The first of these meetings will be Sunday, February 13th at 3:00 p.m. at the Amtrak station. Also invited to this meeting will be the committee chairmen. Although they don't have a vote, they do have a voice. An official notice of this meeting will go out soon. Returning to the regular agenda, Marty called for Old Business items. The January 2005 issue of Northstar News had the minutes of the July 17, 2004 membership meeting. No one had any corrections or additions, so Cy Svobodny moved that they be approved as published. Tom Needle seconded the

motion and it carried. The minutes of the November 20, 2004 meeting were published in the December 2004 issue of Northstar News. Dennis Loudon moved that they be approved as published. Cy Svobodny seconded the motion and the motion carried. Treasurer Joe Fishbein gave his report, which covered November and December of 2004. Cash in checking account, as of November 1, 2004, was \$3,404. Income during the period covered by the report was less than \$1 in checking account interest, dues and donations of \$1,833, and Holiday Banquet registrations of \$630, for a total income of \$2,463. Expenses during the period were dues to National NRHS of \$1,081, Holiday Banquet (payment to Mancinni's) \$630, newsletter expenses of \$123, postage for renewal notices \$38, and national director expenses of \$270, for total expenses of \$2,142. Cash in checking account, as of December 31, 2004, was \$3,725, of which \$3,485 was in the general fund and \$240 was in the GTW 8327 restoration fund. Total chapter membership is 87, of whom 69 have renewed for 2005. Joe said that he has a list of those who have renewed if anyone is unsure of their status. National director Doug Johnson is out east at the private car owners convention. Marty Swan mentioned that he has advised the NRHS national office of the changes in chapter officers. Webmaster Dan Meyers said that he wants more "pizazz" for the chapter's website. This was discussed. He took an informal survey, asking how many have looked at the chapter's present website. He talked about the present content of the website and the need for redesign. National Convention Chairman Dan Meyer reported that the convention was very successful - things ran OK. It was also financially successful - he presented a ceremonial check in repayment of the \$7,000 "seed money" that the chapter had advanced to the convention, plus 2% interest (the actual check had already been presented.) A final report on the convention is due at next spring's NRHS BOD meeting. He asked people to think about what we could have done better. There will be a recognition banquet to reward those who worked on the convention. It will probably be in the spring - date and other details to be worked out. Jeff Smith of the NRHS Bulletin did a write-up on the convention. Dawn Holmberg also did a write-up from a local perspective and submitted many photos for possible publication. Northstar News editor Russ Isbrandt is looking for "How I Became a Railfan" articles and other articles suitable for the newsletter. Normal size of each issue will be 6 pages, not 4 as in recent issues. Everything except the president's column is subject to editing. He will look into the possibilities of sending out the Northstar News by e-mail instead of conventional mail. Program Director John Goodman is attending a meeting in the East and is not present to give a report. Russ Isbrandt will do the program at next month's meeting. Dennis Loudon reported on the Holiday Banquet - it was very successful and everyone seemed to have a good time. We are already booked at Mancini's for Sunday, December 4th. No one had any objection to returning there for this year's party. Mancini's gave us a gift certificate. Warren Krekleberg donated the Official Guides that we gave out at the party as door prizes. Trip Director John Goodman wasn't present to give his report in person, but he had studied the suggested bus trip to Green Bay and Spooner and found that it wouldn't work. He is now looking at a Spooner only trip or a trip to Spooner and the Duluth dinner train, which he feels

would work.

New Business - Some copies of the December issue of Northstar News were returned by the Postal Service as requiring postage for a second ounce. Problems with the chapter's by-laws were discussed. Bill Herzog, the Past President, will be out of town until May. That means there will be only six people available for board meetings until he returns. That could lead to 3 to 3 tie votes. Also, there is no provision for replacing anyone who resigns from the board. National NRHS will be re-doing their by-laws and we may need to change ours to conform. We have a lot of money in the bank after receiving our share of the proceeds from the national convention. How shall we use it? We should not just leave it in the bank, but invest it in worthwhile projects. A committee will be set up to consider that. Meetings - bad weather policy was mentioned. A notice of meeting cancellation can be put on our website. If anyone has any doubt about whether a meeting is still on during bad weather, they can just check our website. No one had any announcements.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Russ Isbrandt and seconded by Tom Neadle The motion to adjourn carried at 7:42 p.m. After a break, there was a door prize drawing for the gift certificate donated by Mancini's. The program was a digital slide show by Greg Smith.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Norman, Secretary

Celebrate the Convention Success

Please join us in celebrating the success of the 2004 national convention of the NRHS, "Rails to the Northstar", on Saturday evening, March 12, beginning at 630PM. The location is the Broadway Bar and Pizza at 2025 W. River Road in Minneapolis. Look for the red caboose at West Broadway Avenue and the river in north Minneapolis. There will be short talks, a slide show of the convention and an all you care to eat pizza buffet including a variety of pizza, salad bar, hoagie sandwiches, soup and pasta and coffee, milk and pop available throughout the meal. Bar service is available but not included in the modest cost of \$15.00 per person including tax and tip. In addition to enjoying Minneapolis' finest pizza your eyes will be treated to a visual feast of railroad photographs and memorabilia. If you would like to attend, please fill out and mail in the reservation insert.

Northstar News
Northstar Chapter NRHS
4036 Birch Knoll Drive
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

Address Correction Requested

Banquet Reservation Insert

Please join us in celebrating the success of the 2004 national convention of the NRHS, "Rails to the Northstar", on Saturday evening, March 12, beginning at 630PM. The location is the Broadway Bar and Pizza at 2025 W. River Road in Minneapolis. Look for the red caboose at West Broadway Avenue and the river in north Minneapolis. There will be short talks, a slide show of the convention and an all you care to eat pizza buffet including a variety of pizza, salad bar, hoagie sandwiches, soup and pasta and coffee, milk and pop available throughout the meal. Bar service is available but not included in the modest cost of \$15.00 per person including tax and tip. In addition to enjoying Minneapolis' finest pizza your eyes will be treated to a visual feast of railroad photographs and memorabilia. We must have the reservation filled out completely and in our hands no later than Wednesday, March 2, 2005. Make your check or moneyorder in the amount of \$15.00 payable to the Northstar Chapter, NRHS, and mail it to Kurt C. Peterson, 5945 Wooddale Avenue, Edina, MN 55424-1841.

Name_____

Address_____

Phone_____

Number of Guests_____X\$15=_____Total Payment

Form of Payment Check

Money Order