



NORTHSTAR NEWS

Dues Are Due Now

An Unusual Christmas Holiday Trip by H. Martin Swan



This drift appeared on the BNSF Giltner Sub south of Aurora, NE December 28th, two days after Marty's slow trip to Chicago. This may have been caused by the same blizzard his *Empire Builder* traveled through. It took seven hours to plow 23 miles from Aurora, NE to Hastings. This may give you a clue as to reasons for extreme delays on the Amtrak, though Amtrak didn't use this particular track. Photo by Craig Williams via www.railpictures.net.

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Meeting Notice

The March meeting of the Northstar Chapter of the NRHS will be held in the Como Park Streetcar waiting station, March 20th, at 7 pm CDT. See map on following page.

There will be a pre-meeting get-together at the Keys Cafe and Bakery at the northeast corner of Lexington and Larpenteur starting about 5:15 pm. Call Bob Clarkson at 651-636-2323 and leave a message with your name and the number of persons coming with you.

Program: Bill Dredge will present a documentary of the Santa Fe's *Super Chief*; Russ Isbrandt will present a video of the chapter's ride to Big Lake on the Northstar commuter train.

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NOTE: Consult the website for any announcements regarding chapter activities including cancellation of any meeting for any reason, including weather.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Dues are \$48 (\$36 for the National dues and \$12 for the local dues). Family memberships are \$5 per person additional. The student rate is \$22 (\$16 for the National, \$6 for the Northstar Chapter). If you want to join, an application is available at <http://www.northstar-nrhs.org/>. Print out this application and send it with a check made payable to "Northstar Chapter NRHS" to Northstar Chapter NRHS Membership Services, P.O. Box 120832, St. Paul, MN 55112.



Dues Are Due NOW

This will be your last Northstar News if we do not receive your dues before the next issuance of the newsletter, about April 5th.

An Unusual Christmas Holiday Trip By H. Martin Swan

The night of December 26 was cold, but I was all warm and toasty in our house and my bags were all packed for the annual after Christmas trip east, this year to Leesburg, VA where my sister lives. Rail destination: Harper's Ferry, W. Virginia.

I called (Amtrak's voice menu) Julie and she advised that the *Empire Builder* was running one hour late at Minot but was expected to arrive St. Paul the next morning on time. Yeah. Sure! Regardless, I ordered a cab for 6:30 am from Green and White and as always they were right on time.

Arrival at Midway was just a bit after 7:00 am. Your beloved editor, Russ and his wife was there before me. Russ was heading east to visit his daughter and her fam-

ily. We would travel together to Pittsburgh where Russ would switch to the *Pennsylvanian* to complete his journey.

As I suspected the *Empire Builder* not only did not make up any time, but actually lost an additional hour and was now scheduled to arrive 2 hours late. The train actually arrived at 8:48, which was 1 hour and 43 minutes late. The second I saw the train, I knew we were in trouble. The train was led by a BNSF freight unit 5425!!!! Following the BNSF unit were 3 Amtrak locomotives 151, 14 and 118, baggage car 1751, transition sleeper 39037, two sleepers 32038, 32055, two coaches 31041, 34063 from Seattle, lounge 33000, two coaches 34028, 31035, one sleeper 32067 from Portland and to be added, a coach, 34099 from St. Paul to Chicago.

The first class lounge at Midway was packed, more people than there were seats. Shortly after the train arrived our car's attendant came in to collect Russ, another passenger and myself and marched us out to our car. I had bought my tickets back in March so not only did I have the lowest possible fare, but I also had the best room, in my opinion, in the car, lower roomette 11. I have always preferred the lower level rooms. Once I was in my room I immediately headed for the dining car for breakfast. After a nice breakfast of a cheese omelet (served too hot to eat right away), grits, sausage and coffee, I headed back to my room. Sadly, we were still in the station and wouldn't depart until 9:47 am, 2 hours 12 minutes late. Time to be a little bit concerned. We had a 2 hour and 45 minute connection with the *Capitol Ltd* and we have already eaten 2 hours and 12 minutes of that. I also noted, as we left, that the train no longer had the BNSF locomotive attached.

As we were to learn, there was a valid reason for that BNSF locomotive to have been on the train; the Amtrak locomotives were not in tip-top mechanical condition.

We lost 15 minutes before we were able to leave Red Wing, lost another 7 minutes at Winona. Prior to Tunnel City we stopped and sat for around 45 minutes while they worked on the locomotive and the head end power. And so it went. We left Milwaukee 3 hours and 44 minutes late. A fast run into Chicago might have gotten us 30 minutes of that back; perhaps they would hold the *Capitol Ltd*.

Nope, no fast run, no holding of the *Capitol*. We followed Amtrak 340's yellow blocks out of Milwaukee. There was a freight train in trouble on the line near Sturtevant which would force us to move over to track one, but first we had to wait for a westbound Milwaukee train (Amtrak 339) to cross over to track 2 behind the freight. Then as we got toward Chicago, switches were frozen at Pacific Junction and they had to wait for a maintainer to come out to manually route the train. As we passed Western Ave., it looked like a major fire, all the switches had oil fired burners and they were all burning. Sure wish I had my camera out for that. At any rate, bottom line, we arrived Chicago at 8:30 pm, 4 hours and 35 minutes late.

The on-board crew did a good job of keeping us informed as to what was happening. They also mentioned

that folks headed up toward Michigan or down to St. Louis had also missed their connections. The usual procedure for those folks was to charter buses for them, but the weather in Michigan and Illinois was so bad that no buses were going to run. Instead the passengers would be put up for the night and they could continue their trip the next day.

Soooooooo, now the fun began.

As usual, I got a ride with the Red Cap handling my baggage on his electric cart. He took me and the other people on the cart to the Customer Service Office and drove on by to a large room where there was a table with 3 - 4 Amtrak people working. The Red Cap advised that we should go in there, mentioning that the people in the other line would be sent over there, so we might well just start there.

The line was short, however, I still thought there might be a chance I could take the *Lake Shore* to New York, then a train down to Washington DC where my sister could pick me up. So I called out if it was possible to get on the *Lake Shore*? Immediately one of the women got up, asked if there was anybody else that wanted to go on the *Lake Shore*, found there was one other and marched us out of the room. To make a long story short, Amtrak would put me on the *Lake Shore* (which left in 15 minutes), but once I got to New York, I was on my own to get down to Washington as they didn't have time to reissue the tickets. But when they found out my ticket was a sleeping car ticket, they advised me that I shouldn't even try since there was no sleeping car space open and trying to exchange the ticket just couldn't be done in the time allowed.

So back to the room where the line was much longer. Eventually I got to the head of the line where a stressed out Amtrak worker was trying to provide what assistance she could. She greeted me with a smile and I explained where I was going and presented my tickets to her. She gave me a voucher for a night at the Homewood Suites (a Hilton hotel) and another voucher for \$32 to cover the Taxi (estimated at \$10) and food. She mentioned that Amtrak had people in their reservation system trying to reaccommodate me and the other passengers, but that perhaps it would help if I called the 800 number that evening.

OK, now back out to the ticket counter to cash in the voucher. There were 15 people ahead of me in the line and there was one ticket clerk working the counter. Sigh. What seemed like ten years later, I finally got to the head of the line and received my \$32 cash. Then I went out for the quick cab ride to the hotel. The hotel wasn't at all bad, it was a Hilton Homewood chain, all suites. No restaurant, however, and since I hadn't eaten since the ham sandwich at noon, I accepted the hotel's suggestion that I call a nearby deli for delivery. I did and all I can say was that it was food. Next morning I slept in a little and went down for the complementary breakfast. It seemed like everybody in the hotel thought that this was a good time to go eat. They even ran out of plates so that the only thing we could use was take-out boxes. Back to the room I called the 800 number, identified myself, gave

them the original reservation number, and was told that I had been assigned space in the handicap section on the lower level of one of the coaches of train 30. That worked for me, but I wondered if any sleeping car space would open up later like at Cleveland or Pittsburgh. Yes, a room opened at Pittsburgh. I had them change the reservation so that I would have coach to Pittsburgh and sleeping car beyond to Harper's Ferry.

I waited until noon to go back to the station and back to the ticket line, this time with about 30 people in line, but 4 clerks were working. It only took what seemed like 5 years to get to the front and I gave my reservation number and the lady pulled it up and started to work on it. Suddenly she stopped and looked at it strangely. She finally said that they didn't charge me the correct rate and started to work. Apparently they were charging me the current fare bucket rate for the room from Pittsburgh to Harper's Ferry instead of the fare bucket that would have applied in March. She got that fixed, issued my tickets and ensured me that I would be getting my meal that evening on the train. When I checked into the Metropolitan Lounge, the person at the desk agreed that I would get my meal and made 6:30 pm dinner reservations for me. So all that remained was to wait for the train. I sat down in the lounge and got out a book and promptly fell asleep.

When I woke up some time later, Russ was in the lounge and he told me that he had been told by the ticket clerk and the Met Lounge people that he didn't get a meal that evening due to the fact that he had cashed in his sleeping car ticket. So I went up to the counter and there were now two ladies, one said yes, the other said no. Interesting!

The train was called and I got a ride out to my coach, the last one on the train. From the rear, we had 3 coaches, one lounge, one dining/lounge and two sleepers, then baggage and the engines. I can't recall if we had a transition sleeper or not. Dinner was called at 6:30 pm and I walked up toward the dining car, only to discover that the door between the first coach and the lounge car was locked. Sigh! Back to my seat. I finally got there at 7:30 pm and the lead attendant didn't have any problem with letting me in with the 7:30 pm group, but he advised that he couldn't give me a free meal without "a paper from the conductor". The conductor happened to be right there so all eyes turned on him. He wasn't about to issue a "paper". I had turned in my sleeping car ticket so I wasn't entitled to my meal. I decided not to argue. I paid for my meal but I did take my receipt for later handling with Amtrak's Customer Service Dept.

Back to my seat. All seats were occupied until we got to South Bend, then several people got off the train, and I got a whole seat to myself. Now to lean back and go to sleep. NOPE. The seats don't recline as far as I recall them doing. I just couldn't get comfortable. Bottom line, I got zero sleep, not even a doze off. I was awake the entire trip to Pittsburgh. It was overcast and snowing and one could look outside the window to watch the view go by. It got to Pittsburgh 22 minutes early at 4:43 am and when I got off it was Cold with a capital "C". I started for the other end of the train and the station. An agent saw

me and told me the station was in the other direction. When she found out I was going to the sleeper she gave me a ride in her baggage cart and refused the gratuity I offered. On the train the attendant offered me the use of the handicap room, which I quickly accepted. I was in bed before we left the station and I recall nothing until 10:00 am the next morning. Since we had a diner/lounge, breakfast and lunch were served continually and thus I had a late breakfast. No problem with the late meal. The train had lost 30 minutes from Pittsburgh, so arrival in Harper's Ferry was 30 minutes down, or to put it another way, I was 24 hours and 30 minutes down.

The return was on January 1. I've taken this trip to either Harper's Ferry or Springfield MA every year for a decade. This is the first time that January 1 wasn't a black-out date. As a result I spent 30,000 points for a bedroom for the entire trip. I like the bedroom, lots of room, big bed and facilities included. The train was due out of Harper's Ferry at 5:16 pm. We got there at 5:00 pm and were soon told it wouldn't get there until 5:40 pm. Harper's Ferry has a nice railroad station--locked up. The track is double track at that point and to reach the normal westbound track one must take advantage of an under track tunnel. At the top of the stairs from the tunnel there is a sort of lean-to, 3 sides. It was cold and windy that night and the lean-to offered scant protection. To make things worse, the train many times comes in on the "wrong" track causing a great scramble to get through the tunnel and to the other side. Tonight it did arrive on the "correct" track, but not until 6:16. It turned out they had engine trouble out of Washington DC (Oh No!!!!!!) and the train was stopped at Point of Rocks for repairs. It did appear that the repairs were successful as we had an uneventful trip and arrived Chicago almost on time. The *Empire Builder* left on time and arrived St. Paul 30 minutes early. The first time this has ever happened to me. Sadly, due to the conditions out west, my train was close to 11 hours late arriving in Seattle. The taxi cab driver on the way home told me that the train due in that morning #8, still hadn't arrived.



An example of what Amtrak faced on the Great Plains. This shot was taken by Kevin Piper from the front platform of a BNSF locomotive near Tamora, NE near Aurora, NE. This is on the double track coal train line and the yellow /red flags protect a Hulcher crew digging out several buried coal trains. Photo by Kevin Piper through railpictures.net

A day or two later, Amtrak annulled the *Empire Builder* west of the Twin Cities. (Editor's Note: The *Builder* was annulled both January 4th and 5th with bus substitution.)

The aftermath:

I did send a letter in to Amtrak President, Mr. Boardman, which complemented Amtrak employees for the way they were able to handle the situation on the downward trip. These poor people had lines of irate and mostly unpleasant people waiting in line to see what Amtrak was going to do about this. Yet they managed to keep a pleasant attitude and a smile on their face. Then I mentioned the problem with the meal where 50% of the personnel had different views as to if the meal should or should not be provided. So what was it? Are you always a first class passenger under these circumstances or do you lose your first class status when you turn your ticket in? I received a call from Mr. Boardman's office and the answer is "You are always a first class passenger under these circumstances and I should have been allowed my meal". I was told that a directive would be sent to Chicago to settle this matter and I got a voucher for future Amtrak travel to cover the cost of the meal. Thus ends this year's trip East.

Editor's Note: Now the rest of the story to quote radio commentator, Paul Harvey:

Unlike Marty, when I called the 800 reservation line to inquire about my re-accommodation, I was told that evening's train 30 was sold out, end of story. I found this unacceptable and asked for and was connected to a customer service rep who repeated the same story. My response was to remind her that I had a ticket which was a contract with Amtrak to get me to my destination. Furthermore, I'd didn't care whether they bused me, flew me or rerouted me, it was their responsibility to get me to Harrisburg. The customer rep then told me to please hold. After a few minutes, she told me I would be accommodated in coach on that night's #30.

The return trip went well until our arrival in the Metropolitan Lounge in Chicago, where upon I was informed that train 7 had been annulled that day and next. Going to the customer service desk, the manager on duty claimed we weren't even on the "list" and there was no information on the computer as to how many other misconnections there would be for the rest of the day. Since there were a number of us off #29 in the same bind, she couldn't decide whether to charter a van or refund our money and send us over to Greyhound. She told us there was a 10:30 am departure for the Twin Cities, so we accepted that offer. Only when we attempted to buy the Greyhound tickets did we learn the bus was sold out and the next bus didn't leave until 3:30 pm. Unlike the "olden days" Greyhound no longer just calls up another driver and dispatches a second section.

I also wrote Mr. Boardman and received a sizeable transportation credit voucher. So now we can gamble on Amtrak next Christmas at a significant discount.

Oh, by the way, we later learned that Amtrak did indeed run a bus that afternoon and we could have spent the day in the Metropolitan Lounge instead of on the perforated steel seats of the bus depot.

Amtrak Releases Fleet Strategy for Rolling Stock From Railway Age Breaking News

An in-house Amtrak study, entitled "Amtrak Fleet Strategy," has framed the need to upgrade its aging passenger rolling stock at cost of \$11 billion (2009 dollars) during a 14-year period. Amtrak also projects follow-up needs for another 16 years beyond the initial period.

In a 99-page document, Amtrak has set forth its preference for "recapitalizing [its] entire fleet over a period of time in a manner that will not only provide new and modern equipment for our customers but will also develop and sustain the domestic production capacity needed for the long-term viability of intercity passenger service in the United States."

Amtrak breaks down its initial replacement needs into three categories: 1,200 passenger cars (780 single-level cars, 420 bilevel cars); 334 locomotives (70 electric engines, 264 diesel units); and 25 high speed rail train sets. "This is just a start of the process. In order to meet the equipment retirement policies, further acquisition programs will run indefinitely," Amtrak adds.

"It is no secret that there has been very limited investment in new passenger equipment by Amtrak in recent years," the railroad says. "The result is that Amtrak's fleet is generally quite old, which creates numerous financial, marketing, and operating challenges." The fleet's age ranges from Amtrak's Acela consists, 9-to-10 years old in 2009, to its aptly named 92-car Heritage fleet, inherited by Amtrak from private carriers and logging in 53-to-61 years of service.

Industry observers have criticized Amtrak for being too slow to initiate any equipment upgrade program, notwithstanding strong fiscal support offered it by the Obama Administration in 2009. But Amtrak spokesman Cliff Black notes, "A fleet plan cannot be executed in a short period of time, despite the hopes and wishes of the traveling public. This process takes some time. Ultimately, it's an ongoing process, and it's begun in earnest. It will continue to evolve into additional acquisitions in future years."

As a start, the study notes, "At the time of this writing, there are two active acquisition projects under way within Amtrak, and a third is in development." The projects include: a "single level long distance vehicle project" to replace the Heritage fleet; replacement of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor workhorses, the AEM-7 electric locomotives; and a potential purchase for additional bilevel cars to first supplement, then eventually replace, its existing bilevel corridor (Amtrak California) fleet.

Among other options, Amtrak affirms its long-rumored interest in diesel multiple-unit (DMU) cars, though the study carefully lists numerous caveats. "If Amtrak is to take a leadership on a DMU concept," the study says, "there must be sufficient vehicles required to justify a new product development launch. Ideally this should be a vehicle requirement of over 100 cars."

Who can spend \$120 billion a year on fast new trains? Ask China

Railway Age Breaking News February 17th

As the Obama Administration handed out \$8 billion in high speed rail seed money last month, the President (as the *New York Times* reported) warned that the U.S. was far behind in an important global race.

"Other countries aren't waiting," he said. "They want those jobs. China wants those jobs. Germany wants those jobs. They are going after them hard, making the investments required."

The President couldn't have been more on point, according to the February issue of *International Railway Journal*, *Railway Age's* sister publication in England that covers the global scene.

IRJ says it has learned from Railways Minister Liu Zhijun that China will spend \$120 billion this year alone on its railways, mostly on a high speed system that already boasts the world's fastest train (it connects Guangzhou, a southern coastal manufacturing center, to Wuhan, 664 miles, in around three hours—less time than Amtrak's Acela Express takes to go from Boston to New York).

And that's only part of a multiyear program that *The Times* says China is using as "a powerful engine for economic growth."

"Indeed, the web of superfast trains promises to make China even more economically competitive, connecting this vast country—roughly the same size as the United States—as never before, much as the building of the Interstate highway system increased productivity and reduced costs in America a half-century ago," said *The Times* in a Feb. 13 report ("China Sees Growth Engine in a Web of Fast Trains"). "As China upgrades and expands its rail system, it creates the economies of large-scale production for another big export industry."

Stephen Gardner, Amtrak's vice president for policy and development, told *The Times*: "The sheer volume of equipment that they will require, and the technology that will have to be developed, will simply catapult them into a leadership position."

The Times sees this as China's response to a "failure of central planning six years ago." Because of a shortage of rail capacity to haul coal, the government by 2004 was rationing power to some factories to prevent blackouts.

"Officials drafted a plan to move much of the nation's passenger traffic onto high-speed routes by 2020, freeing existing tracks for more freight. Then the global financial crisis hit in late 2008," said *The Times*. "Faced with mass layoffs at export factories, China ordered that the new rail system be completed by 2012 instead of 2020, throwing more than \$100 billion in stimulus at the projects."

The plan now is for "42 lines by 2012, with 5,000 miles of track for passenger trains at 215 miles an hour and 3,000 miles of track for passenger and fast freight trains traveling 155 miles an hour."

From Trains Newswire

Virginia looks at Norfolk passenger service

Published: Friday, February 26, 2010

RICHMOND, VA — On the heels of launching a successful state-supported Washington-Lynchburg passenger service, Virginia officials are considering a new Richmond-Norfolk, VA, train, the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot* has reported. Thelma Drake, director of the state's Department of Rail and Public Transportation, said her agency would like to see the state spend \$75 million to launch the service over Norfolk Southern tracks.

The state is pursuing high speed rail service, but Drake said implementation is likely far off. In the interim, she said conventional, 79-mph passenger services are needed.

"There's been a sea change," she said. "The public and our elected officials have come to understand that we just can't build enough roads. They want us to expand their transportation choices."

Virginia's House of Delegates passed a budget proposal yesterday that waives a normally required 30 percent match to state funds provided to launch services. The match would ordinarily come from a railroad, but because the service wouldn't likely be profitable, the waiver is needed. The Senate's budget plan doesn't contain the same provision.

The \$75 million would fund upgrades to NS track, but more money would be needed to build stations at Harbor Park in Norfolk and Bowers Hill in Chesapeake.

The Lynchburg train is Virginia's first foray into state-supported Amtrak services; it began last October. Ridership has come in at double estimated levels, which made the train profitable to operate in its second month.

TIGER grant completes funding for California flyover

Published: Friday, February 19, 2010

SAN BERNARDINO, CA - The \$34 million in stimulus funds allocated for a key Union Pacific-BNSF Railway grade separation gives the project enough money to move forward, the San Bernardino Sun has reported. The Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery grant cements the final needed piece of funding for the \$198 million Colton, Calif., flyover.

The diamond at Colton currently delays trains on both railroads, as approximately 100 daily trains use the junction. The north-south BNSF line carries freights between Los Angeles and Barstow, California, plus Metrolink commuter trains and Amtrak's *Southwest Chief*, while the UP line carries Los Angeles-El Paso, Texas, "Sunset Route" trains, plus Amtrak's *Sunset Limited*.

"This critical investment will create much-needed jobs in the Inland Empire while also helping eliminate a major bottleneck for freight moving along the Alameda Corridor to and from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach," Sen. Barbara Boxer said in a statement.

The state's transportation agency said it doesn't yet know when construction will begin.

Man Bites Dog Department Lynchburg train posts profit

Published: Tuesday, February 16, 2010

RICHMOND, VA — State-supported Amtrak service to Lynchburg, VA, posted a profit last November as ridership continued to rise, the Lynchburg News & Advance has reported. Nearly 10,000 passengers rode the train in its second month of operation, more than double the targeted 4,200.

The one daily Northeast Regional round trip between Lynchburg and Washington has had an added effect: it's freed up space on the daily-each-way Crescent, giving that train a spike in ridership. More than 2,000 riders boarded the Crescent at Danville, VA, in November, compared to just 452 people a year earlier.

The train's estimated monthly operating cost is \$455,000, and November revenue totaled \$534,000. That means Virginia won't need to spend the appropriated \$242,000 monthly operating subsidy it had committed to the train.

Virginia's House of Delegates passed a budget proposal



Above: Twin Cities & Western hitting a snow bank at McLeod County 9 on the west side of Plato, MN. Below: The same train hitting a snow bank at Bongards crossing just off of US 212 between Norwood and Cologne, MN. Photos by Roger Libra



yesterday that waives a normally required 30 percent match to state funds provided to launch services. The match would ordinarily come from a railroad, but because the service wouldn't likely be profitable, the waiver is needed. The Senate's budget plan doesn't contain the same provision.

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Meeting Minutes From the February 20th Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by chapter president Cy Svobodny in the historic Como Park streetcar station with 24 members and guests present. Those present were asked to introduce themselves. The question was asked, did anyone have any changes or corrections to the minutes of the January 16, 2010 membership meeting, as published in the February 2010 issue of Northstar News? It was noted that Dan Meyer did much of the work of preparing the Railfan Calendar. A motion to approve the minutes, as corrected, was made, seconded, and carried. Treasurer Dan Meyer reported that the chapter has 59 regular and 16 family members for 2010, with 17 regular and 3 family members unrenewed at this time. The checking account currently has a balance of \$1,194, plus there is a small amount to be deposited. He noted that we will soon have to tap into the approximately \$30,000 in long-term savings. We are basically solvent, but we are spending more than we are taking in. There was a discussion of several items. It was suggested that we look into seeing if we can get a higher rate of interest on our long-term savings. National director Bill Dredge said that he had received more information on NRHS Heritage Grants. Nevada Northern is withdrawing from Rail Camp, but the one at Steamtown is OK. Bill said that he just got information on the agenda for the upcoming Board of Directors meeting. Bill made a presentation of a pin and certificate for 25 years of NRHS membership to Peg Herzog. She was unable to be present to accept them, but her husband Bill Herzog accepted them on her behalf. Trip director John Goodman congratulated those who came along on the January 30th trip on the Northstar train. There were 19 people on the trip. They ate at the Gaviidae Common Food Court before boarding the train. He reported on the trip. He thanked those who participated in the event. It was suggested that we do it again later in the year, possibly in August. We can't have a picnic at the Big Lake station, or any other Northstar station. He also talked about the Rail Passenger Car Alliance meeting that he attended in January. It was noted that the Gopher Rail event is next Saturday and Steve Sandberg is scheduled to give a talk there, so we may learn more about his plans for rail excursion operations for this year. At this time, the status of restored Milwaukee Road steam engine #261 is unknown. It is possible that another engine may be brought in to operate trips this year. There was a discussion on this subject. John Goodman also reported on meeting program plans. Programs are set up through May. Russ Isbrandt will

do a program on the chapter's trip to Big Lake on the Northstar line in March, Richard Tubessing will do a program on steamer 4449 in April, and Dawn Holmberg will do one in May. June and July are open. We will have our chapter picnic in August. John also brought up the site for our upcoming meetings. The chapter has paid the Minnesota Transportation Museum for us to hold our May, June, and July meetings there. We can meet in an old coach. We need to decide about September and after. It was noted that meeting at Jackson St. is cheaper than meeting in the Como Park streetcar station. We should decide soon, if possible, as other groups may also want to use the streetcar station. Other possibilities were also mentioned. We will see what happens. Someone made a motion, but it was withdrawn as no one seconded it. Marty Swan reported for the Cheer Committee - he did not hear of anyone who needed a card since the last meeting. John Goodman thanked the chapter for the sympathy card after the death of his mother. Librarian John Cartwright reported on work on organizing the chapter library. Basically, we will keep on doing what we have been doing. He reported on the status of inventorying the collection. He noted that we recently got a new filing cabinet. The suggestion was made that we put the slides in our collection on DVD and sell them that way. This idea was discussed. Richard Tubessing volunteered to scan the slides and put them on a DVD. Cy Svobodny noted that he had recently shown 380 slides from the Kurt Peterson Collection at a recent meeting of the Twin Cities Division of the National Model Railroad Association. There was more discussion. Cy said that, "Library is a lot of fun." The Railfan Guide published by the chapter was discussed, particularly the distribution. It is available, but not being picked up at Becker's. They are available only in the back

room at Scale Model Supply. After a discussion, the matter was tabled until the March meeting. There was no other Old Business. The only New Business was several announcements. The Minnesota House has passed (or soon will pass) a bill for funding of the state's share of the costs of extending the Northstar line to St. Cloud. A second engine has been painted in the old colors of the Northern Pacific. Exchange newsletters are available at the front table.

After a break, John Cartwright presented a program on Lost Minnesota Railroads.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Norman, Secretary, Northstar Chapter NRHS

Railfan Calendar

Greater Upper Midwest Train Show

Saturday, April 10th, 9:00 am - 2:00 pm, Century College, White Bear Lake, MN. Admission \$5.00, children under 12 free.

Woodbury Flea Market

Saturday, April 17th, 10 am - 3 pm, Woodbury High School, 2665 Woodlane Dr. Admission \$5.00, under 12 years free.

Granite City Train Show

Saturday, April 24th, 9:00 am - 3:30 pm, National Guard Armory, St. Cloud, MN, 1710 Veteran's Drive. Admission \$5.00, 12 and under free.

Twin City Model Railroad Museum Model Railroad Toy Train Railroad Hobby Sale

Saturday May 8th, 9 am - 3 pm, State Fair Grounds Education Building, St. Paul, MN. Admission \$6, children 5 and under free.

Northstar News
Northstar Chapter
National Railway Historical Society
4036 Birch Knoll Drive
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

Address Correction Requested