



# The Highball



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER  
of the  
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OLD DOMINION CHAPTER

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## Monthly Meeting

Bill Todd/Dale Diacont

The monthly meeting of the ODC will be held at 7 pm on Monday, 1/16 at Hull Street Station. Dale Diacont, ODC member & retired SCL/CSX engineer, will present the program featuring an 80-slide show which will be an overview from an eight day expedition to Utah. Accompanying me on this venture is fellow railroad retiree and VCU alumni Stanley W. Short. The impetus for the trip was a desire to watch and photograph trains climbing the joint ex-D&RGW and Utah main line up and over Soldier Summit.

As everyone east of the Appalachian range knows, coal isn't king anymore! Such is the case in Utah, too. With the once mighty Geneva Steel Works now just a memory and a softening demand for steam coal, once plentiful coal trains are now scarce as hen's teeth in Price River Canyon. We devoted four days of the trip to Soldier Summit and managed only to catch a single empty hopper train coming down the hill.

Nonetheless, it was a tremendously successful trip. During the next four days, we also rode and photographed UTA's FrontRunner between Provo and Ogden. Our viewfinders also focused on UTA's Trax light rail system in and about Salt Lake City. And we were fortunate to even catch the Salt Lake, Garfield and Western Railroad as they began their work day. The SLG&W is no "Johnny come lately" short line!

We will have the program first, followed by refreshments and then business last. So, please be on time. Door prizes. Bring a friend.



## Christmas Party Pix, Model RR Update

Kim Young





## A Message from the President

John DeMajo

I want to thank the members of the Old Dominion Chapter for affording me the honor and privilege of leading our organization this coming year. This month's president's column, which will again become a regular feature of the Highball, is a bit lengthy, but we have a lot to cover. I promise shorter columns in the future.

For those of you who aren't already aware, my background is rooted in operating an engineering firm and construction company for 40 years before retiring. I therefore bring to the table some ideas which I hope will allow us to boost our membership, motivate more people to get actively involved in the club's work, and also present our organization to various business and private entities in order to help us overcome the financial and membership issues that many "niche" societies are facing today. Here are just a few of the priorities that will be up for discussion in the coming year:

- Much of our work currently relies on the consensus of committees. One thing I learned early on in the business world is that things go a lot smoother if one person, or a small group, is given "ownership" of a project, and of course the resources to perform the task. As evidenced by the results we noted when our own Calvin Boles, who has great artistic talent, was given ownership of the project to redesign the museum's display boards, we now have the old dreary photo boards replaced with snappy new displays that will present a positive image for the museum. This was sorely needed to improve our display area, and Calvin has done an extraordinary job, in just a matter of a few months, by personally seeing the work through from initial design to completion.

- Likewise, Steve Tarrant has been a great asset in his survey and redesign work for proposed track and ground improvements at the station. It was only necessary for us to turn Steve loose and let him do his thing, and the results have been impressive to say the least.

- I also want to acknowledge the work that John Forsythe has been doing. Having just been elected to the board, John is already actively acquiring grants for the organization, and he has used his professional museum talents to expedite the process of putting 102 Hull Street on the National Register.

- Meanwhile, the trip committee, headed by Ned Krack, along with Bob Dickinson, Kim Young, Tom Hardesty and others, has been working hard to improve our excursion experience. This year was a good one in that many of our trains were sold out. For now, the club depends greatly on the income derived from trips, so we hope to build on this in the future with improved equipment and services. Thanks also go out to the folks at Buckingham Branch Railroad for their partnership with us in this endeavor.

- Hallsboro has seen improvements under the direction of Kevin Frick. In the months to come, we hope to obtain grants to assist in maintaining and improving the yard and the club's rolling stock. I would also like to see us eventually use Hallsboro as a training school for maintenance personnel and rail camps. We have the potential for that, and if everyone gets on board, I feel that we could have an exceptional training school that would maintain our equipment as well as bringing in funds to support the Hallsboro yard improvement work.

- The club's archives are also undergoing improvements. Seeing the need to eventually vacate the borrowed space at 3600 West Broad, Chuck Breeden and Bob Dickinson have been working to utilize our REA car at the museum as a library for archival photos and material. We are also continuing our efforts to catalog the archival collection so that we can provide research services to the public.

- The Hull St. Station is on our radar for improvements, both interior and exterior. With increased activity in the Manchester area, the area around the station will certainly be seeing improvements with many condo developments and new businesses coming on line. We are actively planning to play an important role in this development with grounds and building improvements at the station. Our new vision is to make the area around the museum a pleasant rail park environment where folks from the area can come to enjoy the scenery while learning about Richmond's rich rail history.

- Finally, a major priority this year will be inventorying and accounting for the club's many assets. We have identified an intern whom we hope will be able to inventory all of our holdings, not only in the archives, but also in the museum, Hallsboro, and any other locations where we have

property stored. Each item owned by the club will be assigned a bar code number and be entered into a database so that we can account, both to our donors and to the IRS, as to where all of our donated property exists.

In closing, I ask that members be on the lookout for anything that can improve the club's image and our networking abilities with the railroads, area businesses, and the public. My contact information is on the web site and in the Highball, so please do not hesitate to speak up if you have a suggestion, an idea, or just want to become more involved.

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### **Place Your Bets**

Doug Riddell

Without trying to step on anyone's political leanings, after the election of Donald J. Trump as the next President of the United States, if anyone tells you they know with exact certainty what the new chief executive's transportation policy will be—especially with an eye toward rail and public transportation spending—take it with a grain of salt. Aside from the fact that Mr. Trump's position on a host of issues has wavered from one extreme to the other over the last year and a half, among industry insiders (whose job it is to analyze data and advise clients on matters vital to government policy), it's not even clear whether or not the next president's influence within his own party can overcome decades of belt tightening and rejection of a number of major public works and infrastructure projects that he personally championed during his election campaign.

Most observers already discount the \$1-trillion proposal Mr. Trump has floated as something that may survive its rocky road through Congress, but in a greatly scaled-down version. Even with his choice of Elaine Chao for Secretary of Transportation, to herd the big ticket bill past the obstacles that stand in its path upon fiscally conservative Capitol Hill, there is no guarantee that with her four years as an under secretary of transportation, her eight years as Secretary of Labor and her 23 years of marriage to Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, it is not clear whether their combined efforts can soften the heart of Republicans who have consistently attempted to end subsidies to Amtrak and sell off its assets, or find sympathy for public transportation spending. Some items proposed by the president

elect have more support from the opposition Democratic Party than from the GOP.

For example, a group of red-state Republicans have just begun calling for reinstatement of the moribund Sunset Limited that has not operated between New Orleans and Orlando since the right of way was damaged by Hurricane Katrina ten years ago. While this may sound good on the surface, a couple of voices have been heard, warning that Congress is too often disposed to pass unfunded mandates, which could put pressure on Amtrak to resume service between Florida and New Orleans, while causing it to reduce or eliminate service on another route or routes.

There was fear among Amtrak supporters initially when the name of recently defeated Rep. John Mica (R-FL) was raised as a possibility to lead the Transportation Department. Despite the fact that Amtrak Silver Service and Auto Train has a strong presence in his district, Mica proved to be one of, if not the biggest critics of the national passenger rail company, referring to it as a "Soviet style operation."

Ms. Chao, whose family has investments in the shipping industry, brings to the table a reputation for being anti-labor, too often finding herself siding with business interests. The Association of American Railroads (AAR), aside from being excited about the possibility of massive infusions of cash to prop up or replace crumbling infrastructure, is nearly giddy at the prospect of a transportation secretary who they feel looks favorably upon single-person operating crews, especially at a time when rail unions and groups concerned about safety issues surrounding the carriage of hazardous materials have made inroads toward legislation that would mandate a minimum of two-persons in locomotive cabs. They also feel that in her appointment, while they do not oppose the call for Positive Train Control, with Ms. Chao responsible for its implementation, railroads may be able to postpone the day of reckoning when they must have such a crash avoidance system in place. The AAR is looking for far less regulation than more restrictive rule making.

One thing for sure, the next four years are going to be interesting in terms of how America's railroads will fare, and how the industry—both freight and passenger—will change, for better, or the worse.

## Railroad Scanner Outdoor Antenna

John DeMajo

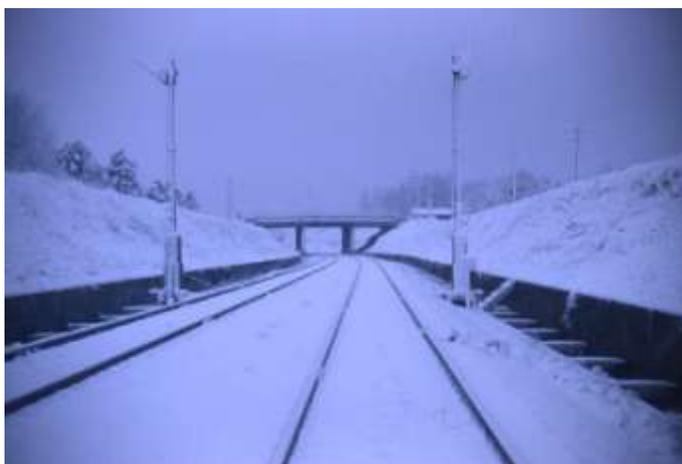
Many of us have VHF scanners that we use to listen to direct communications from the railroads. A lot of these devices are Radio Shack type portables, with classic "rubber duck" antennas that have a limited range. At times, it is desirable to have a more powerful outdoor antenna for the purpose of capturing distant transmissions, especially when trying to hear traffic from trains on the road. As a ham radio operator who is always looking for economical ways to improve my radio station, I recently came across a design for an outdoor antenna that, while intended for transmitting on the 2 meter ham band, will work equally as well when connected to a railroad frequency scanner. The device can be built using a single 10 foot length of 3/4" copper pipe, and a few copper plumbing fittings, available from almost any hardware store. It is classified as a "J" Pole type antenna, and it is very easy to build if you have the correct measurements to cut the copper pipe. The total cost of my project was under \$25. The antenna boasts a gain of +3 Decibels over a standard wire antenna, and it will yield significantly higher performance than a typical "rubber duck" or telescoping whip antenna typically supplied with scanner radios. If anyone is interested in building an antenna like this, please contact me ([jdemajo@demajo.net](mailto:jdemajo@demajo.net)) and I will send you a set of plans and easy to follow instructions.



## January Archives Photo

Charles Curley

We have another snow scene this month. Taken on January 11, 1955 by Evan Siler, it shows the semaphore signals at Grove Avenue on the James River Branch of the RF&P (the Belt Line) which was used by the ACL. The photo is looking south toward the Grove Avenue bridge. These signals were still being used even though, the ACL had upgraded to target signals in the Richmond area around 1949. I grew up in the area and remember the bridge and the little gas station to the right of the bridge, but the signals were gone by the time that I moved into the neighborhood in 1959.



## Ashland Mural

Charles Curley

This mural was recently completed in Ashland Virginia. It's located on the south side of the Caboose just down the street from the Iron Horse. The locomotive is lettered for the RF&P and resembles some of their 4-6-2's, but I could not find a #222 in the steam roster.



## Richmond Railroad Museum and Archives Report for January 2017

Bob Dickinson

Visitors: 244

Total visitors for 2016: 2968 (Probably over 3000 as some don't always sign in!)

Donations: \$144.00

Volunteer hours: 251

Gift shop sales: \$885.05 (includes \$559.00 from the Greenburg Show)

Chapter meeting attendance: 37

Tour visitors: WJCC group – 41

Thanks to everyone that volunteered at the museum in 2016 – names are too numerous to mention! On a month like this January or last December there are at least 27 “slots” that hosting volunteers need to fill so the same person does not have to do “double or triple duty”! Thanks so much to Linda Nelson for co-ordinating all of these volunteers. Many of the same “hosts” that work in the station also work on other Chapter activities and projects - including BB trips, Ashland “Train” days, the “Greenburg” train show, the “Highball”, Chapter meetings, the model railroad, museum tours, building displays, ticket sales, the “Trip” committee, the “Museum” committee, the “Archives” committee, Chapter management and of course “Hallsboro”.

What are the plans for 2017? We have already budgeted for improvements to the model train room. (Carpet and lighting). Additional display boards, reinforcement of the freight room floor, and a walkway between the station and baggage car are some of the items targeted for the new-year. Have ideas or projects that you would like to see done? Please join us at the next museum committee meeting and volunteer.

The next museum committee meeting will be Saturday morning January 14<sup>th</sup> starting at 9:30 AM in the museum. All interested are invited to attend

## Museum Hosts for January

Linda Nelson

7	Linda Nelson	Gift Shop
	Bob Stevens	Host
	Calvin Boles	Host
8	Ned Krack	Gift Shop
	Bob Williams	Host

	Steve Tarrant	Host
14	Ned Krack	Gift Shop
	Bob Dickinson	Host
11-1:30	Jack Newsome	Host
1:30-4	Jim Lewis	Host
15	Carl Steiner	Gift Shop
	Wayne Poates	Host
	Greg Hodges	Host
21	Bob Dickinson	Gift Shop
	Ned Krack	Host
	Bill Taylor	Host
22	Greg Hodges	Gift Shop
	Charles Curley	Host
	Bob Preston	Host
28	Greg Hodges	Gift Shop
	Chuck Breeden	Host
	Ned Krack	Host
29	Ned Krack	Gift Shop
	Bob Dickinson	Host
	Jerry Grosshans	Host

### "The Meteor from Hell"

Bill Todd

As mentioned at our last ODC meeting, Ann & I took Amtrak to/from NYC for a Christmas reunion with Ann's daughter's in-laws at the Yale Club (UVA has privileges.) across the street from Grand Central Terminal. We departed from Richmond on December 20 on #84 (business class) at 8.18 AM and arrived at Penn Station at 2.30 PM right on time. With several choices to return on December 22, we chose #97 "The Silver Meteor" (coach class) so we could have dinner in the diner! What a disaster!

To begin with, the train arrived into Penn Station from Sunnyside Yard 20 minutes late and could not make that up by arrival in Washington Union Station. At that point, things started to go really wrong. The diesel locomotives that were supposed to couple onto #97 would not start up on an adjacent track and delayed us an hour before temporary repairs were made. Emphasis on temporary! At Alexandria the units broke down again. After restarting, the train advanced one mile and broke down again. Finally, the train backed to the station to pick up a relief engineer. We arrived in Richmond five hours late, at 2.30 AM rather than 9.30 PM. Remember, every time the locomotives failed, all main lights and air stopped and all

passenger cars went dark except for emergency lights. Bad scene. And, to add insult to injury, no dinner in the diner! Passengers almost went berserk. Of all my experiences of riding trains since 1945, including Amtrak since 1971, this "Meteor From Hell" was the worst!

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### 611 Schedule Announced

VMT/fireup611.org

April 8, 2017 - The Virginian, Spencer, NC to Lynchburg, VA

April 9, 2017 - The Charlotte Special, Spencer, NC to Charlotte, NC

April 9, 2017 - The Piedmont Limited, Spencer, NC to Greensboro, NC

April 22, 2017 - The Roanoker, Greensboro, N.C. to Roanoke, Va.

April 23, 2017 - The Roanoker, Greensboro, N.C. to Roanoke, Va.

May 6, 2017 - The Cavalier, Lynchburg, Va., to Petersburg, Va.

May 7, 2017 - The Cavalier, Lynchburg, Va., to Petersburg, Va.

May 27, 2017 - The Powhatan Arrow, Roanoke, Va., to Lynchburg, Va.

May 27, 2017 - The Pocahontas, Roanoke, Va., to Walton (Radford), Va.

May 28, 2017 - The Powhatan Arrow, Roanoke, Va., to Lynchburg, Va.

May 28, 2017 - The Pocahontas, Roanoke, Va., to Walton (Radford), Va.

May 29, 2017 - The Powhatan Arrow, Roanoke, Va., to Lynchburg, Va.

May 29, 2017 - The Pocahontas, Roanoke, Va., to Walton (Radford), Va.

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### Membership and Highball

Kim Young

As we start the new year, please don't forget to renew your membership. You may pay me at the chapter meeting or mail a check to ODCNRHS PO Box 3131 Chester VA 23831. I do not need a membership form unless your information has changed.

If you are receiving **The Highball** by snail mail, please consider changing to email. You will get it several days sooner, and the pictures will be in color. This will also save the chapter some money. The email contains a PDF file that you can easily print if you want a hard copy.

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## Railroading Today

Gerry Grosshans

The latest issue of TRAINS magazine is basically about tunnels, including the 30+ mile tunnel in Switzerland, but also has the best article I have seen with respect to a project much closer, the Virginia Avenue tunnel in D.C., the really first coverage of that project I have seen. As printed, it states that by the middle of January the first of the twin tunnel should be in operation, at which time the old tunnel will be torn out and the second tunnel will be under construction. Remember, while the project is referred to as a "tunnel" it is actually twin tunnels side by side, with clearance for double stacks. One of the interesting feature of this project is that there will apparently be a location at the south end of the tunnel, for railfans to observe trains exiting and heading to the south. If and when the first tunnel is in use, theoretically double stack service could then began, so I hope that CSX will announce the start of such service (which would main these trains going through Richmond) after which time the issues of the tunnels in Baltimore will have to be addressed. (Editor's note: On 1/6, Gerry called to inform me that in a one-hour stretch around 7 pm he had seen two double-stacks southbound at Centralia Rd.) As the Virginia Avenue tunnel has proceeded I kept reading that it was the only impediment to the use of these trains through here, several old inadequate over-passes here having been removed (Platinum Lane and Blue Shingles). Of course there is double stack service on NS to and from Norfolk, but I have noticed that the NS trains carry enclosed auto carriers I guess that is due to the auto loading facility off of Wagner Rd. there.

I previously asked about names for the new signal installations on the recently re-installed double track between Collier and Carson. Maybe these will not get a name but will be referred to by the mile-post, a situation which is frequent at the Quartermaster signals at mp 8.1. When passing that location most crews (if you can understand them) will use the milepost rather than the name, especially Amtrak crews. By the way, if you get out that way, the motor pool at the defense center near the tracks keeps growing.

For some time CSX has been using decals on the sides of locomotive noses for what some persons call "Poor Man's Heritage" but an SD40-3 #4384

has come out with a revised yellow nose ,and Clinchfield lettering thereon.

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The new Amtrak dining cars may finally be in use after more than a two-year delay.

The February TRAINS also includes an explanation of the various ways locomotive builders achieve tier 4 emissions...use of a catalyst, particulate filters, exhaust gas recirculation and fluid catalytic reduction using a urea and water solution. The large units from GE and EMD use EGR but the EMD locomotive for commuter use will use the urea fluid.

As I am attempting to put this together, I am following news of an incident involving a Long Island commuter train apparently making hard contact with a bumping post at a terminal, much as happened a short while ago in Hoboken. It appears that at least 100 were injured none appearing to be serious and no fatalities, so far. There are reports of speed variations and the engineer is to be tested for sleep apnea.

The city is apparently closing East Main street where it passes over the NS trackage heading to West Point. Giving credit where due, Decatur street has finally been repaved between Commerce Road and First street, by the museum. Travelling there is so much better and I will let the chapter leadership decide on what to do about the paving over the tracks leading to our team track at the First Street and Decatur intersection.

I just heard that Amtrak will apparently suspend service south of Washington this weekend due to the impending snow event. In the past the trains were often the only public transportation operating at such times

I guess the former SCWX hopper trains have left CSX for NS, using a Roanoke-Altavista-Danville south routing. Meanwhile a new series of hopper trains using cars labeled DKPX (I believe.) perhaps Duke Power in NC as well as cars labeled GGPX are now frequently seen heading west on the Bellwood trackage. Also I have not seen any DPU locomotives in some time

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