



# The Highball

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER  
of the  
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OLD DOMINION CHAPTER



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## Chapter Meeting

Bill Todd

The monthly meeting of the ODC will be held on 9/18 at 7 pm at Hull St. Station. ODC member Ned Krack will present another one of his outstanding Railroad Quarterly DVD Videos which will contain a variety of train subjects guaranteed to please. Please make sure to attend, bring a friend, refreshments available. See you there.

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## From the President

John DeMajo

Well it's been almost a year since I was given the mission of guiding the ODC as your president. Looking back over the past months, I see many accomplishments that were not mine to claim, but that were the result of turning the right motivated people loose to do jobs and handle projects in which they took pride. There are a lot of people to thank and commend, and while my space here is limited, I want to thank everyone who has helped our organization. That includes Calvin Boles who has made unbelievable strides in bringing the museum's appearance to a level it had never attained before. Then there is Chuck Breeden who, as our new Librarian, has done a tremendous amount of work to organize and digitize our photography collection. And of course there is David Coldren who is producing what is stacking up to be an incredibly successful train day program. Credit also goes to John Forsythe and Eric App for their work in finally putting together a formal fundraising effort for the club. There are many others who deserve credit for our success such as Kevin Frick, Devon and the crew who have reinvigorated the work at Hallsboro, Carl Steiner and John Estes for their work in controlling our budget, Ned Krack for being my right hand man when it comes to organizing our insurance, financial

and excursion programs, Kim Young for his work with the excursion ticket sales and promotion and our newsletter, James Dunlap and Steve Tarrant for their work around the station and with the speeder program, Ray Potter for his excellent and successful work with our publicity, and Bob Dickinson and Bob Stephens for their work in keeping the station and the excursion train maintained.

Last but not least, I want to thank the entire board of directors and the membership with whom I work, for their willingness to listen to new ideas and to support the programs that have placed our organization in a position to continue growth and success. This year, for the first time in years, we have new young members who are interested in taking up leadership positions in the organization. As a member of the senior generation, I look forward to being able to begin handing over the reins to a new generation of leaders in the future.

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## September Archives Photo

Charles Curley

A Norfolk and Western Z1a 2-6-6-2 heads a work train eastbound through Bedford VA in this Evan Siler shot. By the 1950's, the Z1a's were relegated to the locals, work trains and yard work.



## Thoughts on The Ashland High Speed Rail Route and Buckingham Branch Railroad

Doug Riddell

In the last issue of *Highball*, I noted a reference to the high speed rail routing at Ashland and since I'm involved in it, I thought I'd offer a little insight as to what's going on, especially with reference to possible use of the Buckingham Branch Railroad (BBRR) for freight or passenger service.

One of the parameters for the DC2RVA project, since the right of way will involve joint use of CSX tracks with Amtrak (and VRE in northern Virginia) is that any additional track must not put CSX in any worse position with reference to its operations. In particular, since the ruling grade of the [former] RF&P is .8%, any new track or route exceeding this is not acceptable. There are grades between Doswell and Amtrak Junction that are in excess of 1.25%, which eliminates its use. Since CSX (and most class one railroads) see double stack container trains as the future of their freight business, and since CSX requires a clearance of 20', it has made clear that it will not consider using the former C&O Piedmont Subdivision, crossing to the former SAL Bellwood Subdivision, because the clearance at the triple crossing at 15th and Dock Streets is 17'. (The alarm is set to go off to warn of any load with a vertical clearance of 16'10"). Other than raising the entire C&O James River viaduct between 2nd Street Yard and Fulton, there is no way to change the clearance, since the NS (former Southern West Point Branch) is at river level, not to mention problems with the James River Flood Wall that any changes would bring about.

The plan (as it appears most likely) is for the Staples Mill Road facility to remain the primary Amtrak terminal in Richmond, with Main Street Station to be used solely as a "pass thru" station, much the same as Wilmington, DE. This eliminates the BBRR for passenger use at the outset. The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) has already acquired most of the parcels of land around the station and is having them paved to provide parking and expanded crew and storage. It is likely that the current 1975 constructed station building will be replaced with a structure more suitable for the current and future needs of Richmond's rail passengers. When Amtrak left Broad Street Station in 1975, there were only three sets of trains using it, and since it was believed that Amtrak would cease

to exist within a few years, there was no reason to believe that anything grander was necessary. As for the BBRR itself, there is also no southward to eastward connection at Doswell. To build such a connection would require condemning and acquiring most of the land on the east side of the RF&P Subdivision at Doswell and razing all of the structures (including businesses, private homes and HN Tower). While the RF&P has been considerably straightened and doubled tracked since its humble beginnings in 1834, the BBRR is in essence the same as it was at the time of the American Civil War. Once the more grade favorable Richmond & Allegheny was obtained by the C&O, the James River line became their primary freight route, so little thought was given to improving the Piedmont Subdivision. While passenger trains did have a top speed of 65 MPH, there were very few places where any of their trains could come near it.

In modern times, the signaling and most sidings of the BBRR having been removed, so with the exception of Atlee, there is no place for trains to meet or be passed. It's a single-track railroad with very few stretches of straight track, built largely on fills and bridges across numerous rivers, creeks and swamps, which often make it subject to washouts after a good gully-washing rainstorm. Aside from speed restrictions resulting from the sharp curves, the BBRR is laid entirely with 39-foot jointed rail and maintained for a top operating speed of 25 MPH per Federal Railway Administration (FRA) track standards.

For most of its length between Doswell and Richmond, commercial and residential development has encroached upon the right of way, which makes acquiring land for possible widening, double tracking, or simply easing cures on the BBRR a very expensive proposition. Instead of open farm land, once east of Hanover Courthouse, any upgrading would consist of purchasing suburban homesites and building lots. Further into town, where the line forms the boundary between Henrico County and the City of Richmond, houses and commercial structures are so close to the track that people throw old appliances and their household garbage over their backyard fences and down onto the right of way.

Finally, if you think the congestion at Acca Yard is a bottleneck, imagine if you will, all of Richmond's Amtrak trains, attempting to get into and out of Main Street Station, having to fight with CSX freight trains to use the two main line tracks. CSX

and the state are in the final stages of a \$132-million project to reconfigure Acca yard so that freight trains can avoid delaying passenger trains by using the former ACL west route, leaving the former SAL east route to Amtrak, with the exception of traffic being backhauled up the hill from Fulton. We'd be right back where we started with delay after delay. The point of the project is to minimize delays and increase reliability, so that rail travel times, although not genuinely "high speed," will make train travel competitive with the automobile. It is not clear whether the remedy for high speed rail through Ashland will be in the form of a third rail through town, a tunnel beneath it, or a bypass to the east or west sides, but it's highly doubtful for a multitude of reasons, that as much as it might make for a nostalgic return to Richmond's railroading of yesteryear, the Buckingham Branch Railroad/former C&O Piedmont Subdivision, will figure into it.



### Museum Host Schedule

Linda Nelon

2	Ervin White	Gift Shop	
	Bill Taylor	Host	
	Bob Stevens	Host	
3	Ned Krack	Gift Shop	
	Steve Tarrant	Host	
	Jim Lewis	Host	
9	Greg Hodges	Gift Shop	
	Stanley Clark	Host	
	Calvin Boles	Host	
10	Greg Hodges	Gift Shop	
	Charles Curley	Host	
	Bob Williams	Host	
	Ned Krack	Floodwall	
16	Linda Nelon	Gift Shop	
	Jack Newsom (11-1:30)		Host
	Jim Lewis (1:30-4)		Host
	Bob Dickinson		Host
17	Linda Nelon	Gift Shop	

	Bill & Ann Todd	Host
	Tom Emory	Host
23	Train Day Special Event	
	SEE DAVE CALDREN	
24	Ned Krack	Gift Shop
	Jerry Grosshans	Host
	Bob Dickinson	Host
	Wayne Poates	Host
30	Greg Hodges	Gift Shop
	Stanley Clark	Host
	Bob Stevens	Host
1-Oct	Ned Krack	Gift Shop
	Ray Potter	Host
	Tom Emory	Host

### Richmond Railroad Museum and Archives Report for August 2017

Bob Dickinson

Visitors: 316 (2354 year to date)

Donations: \$520.

Volunteer hours: 308

Gift shop sales: \$390.28

Tours: 60

Floodwall tour: 4

Chapter meeting: 28

The number of visitors to the museum has exceeded last year's in every month but one – April. Looks like we are on the way to a new record!

The boy scouts once again this year visited the museum for their merit badge event. (32 in group) Unfortunately they arrived about 2 hours late due to Amtrak delays. Looked liked everyone had a good time. Ray Potter and his wife organized a tour for a group for the Child Time day care center. (28 visitors) Thanks to Calvin Boles, Ray Potter, Greg Hodges, John DeMajo, Steve Tarrant, and others for helping with the tours.

Recently Stanley Clark donated a ceiling mounted "chandelier". It has an oil lamp and is adjustable. It has now been mounted in the freight room. It is similar to ones that were mounted over the desks in railroad stations in days gone by. Thanks to Stanley for the donation and to Calvin for getting it mounted.

Ned reports that expenses for utility bills at the station have increased about 5% over the last year. The station has always run a deficit - that is our expenses are more than our income. New signs have been put on the donation box at the station entrance suggesting a specific amount. So far after a week or two it already looks like donations have improved.

Where does the money go? For August some of these expenses were: Water bill - \$34.17, Sewer - \$42.08, Trash pickup- \$20.80, Electric - \$721.34, Maintenance - \$317.70, Supplies - \$58.31 plus telephone and insurance!

The date for the next Museum Committee meeting will be announced later.

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### **Buckingham Branch Trips**

Ned Krack

The Old Dominion Chapter will operate its fall and Santa trips this October and December. The Autumn Leaf Rambler will operate on October 14, 21, and 28 with a 9:30 and 1:30 each day. The Santa trains will operate the first three Saturdays in December (2nd, 9th, and 16th) with six trips daily starting at 9:30 a.m. (Editor's note: At press time the following trips are sold out: 10/14 & 10/21 @ 1:30, 12/2 @ 10:30.) Volunteers are needed for all trips and all positions. To volunteer, please contact Ned Krack at 804-239-4067 or nedrdgfan@msn.com.

Also, work days are being scheduled to prepare the trains for the excursions. For more information, please contact Ned.

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### **Railroading Today**

Gerry Grosshans

An interesting letter appeared in the latest issue of TRAINS Magazine concerning the cover photograph of the August issue, where several persons were at the end of a trestle. in the ballasted right of way, with the Circus Train almost upon them. The letter was from an official of Operation Lifesaver, taking issue with the photo and the actions shown. During this interval, our local paper published an equally questionable photograph of a group of performers jumping around acting up on the Norfolk Southern trackage at their little drawbridge at the shiplock park. This photograph even managed to include two, "no trespassing" signs posted by NS! No wonder, as I write this that everyone is mourning the death of a youth, trespassing on CSX tracks, killed by a "cargo train." The youth died, but in all of the coverage of this event, I did not see anything about trespassing,

basically making CSX out as the offender. Quite a few years ago I wrote the newspaper and mentioned my concern about publishing such a photograph, only to have a representative of the paper call me and inquire as to my "expertise" in the area.

Another person from the paper contacted the late Jack Stith, and the result was my letter stating my affiliation with the ODC, NRHS and Operation Lifesaver being published, which brought reprimands and other personal aggravation to me. I still say, as an individual, organization member, and a concerned rail fan that we confront this type of publicity when and where it occurs.

A Georgia jury recently awarded \$3.9M to the family of a film worker who was killed by a train on a railroad bridge while filming "Midnight Rider" which as not yet been released. As CSX has the "deep pockets" it is assumed that it will be the entity hit, although it is appealing the verdict. The film director served a year in jail on involuntary manslaughter and criminal trespass. The film was to be about Gregg Allman and his band, and Allman family members are believed to have gone to court to prevent the film's release.

I don't remember if I mentioned this or not in earlier issues, but I have several copies of the AMTRAK consolidated schedules which I pick-ed up when I heard that they would be discontinued, so if anyone needs or wants one, I have a copy or two, not counting the one I got for the archives.

For all practical purposes, the Utah Railway no longer exists, with no coal to haul or any contracts. They do some switching for BNSF in Utah but the old heavily rebuilt MK5000 units are now working in Kansas

Many railroads in the past standardized with EMD power, but it appears that Pan Am Railroad is going to rely heavily on older GE units. They still have a number of EMD four axle units, as there are very few GE four axles available, including no switchers. Either the city or CSX has put up no left turn signs at the Broad Rock crossing along with reflectorized markers. The long gate that covers the northbound movements now has a support pole installed, which always points down and helps support the gate.

The Richmond Railroad Museum presents

**FREE!**

# **RICHMOND TRAIN DAY 2017**

**SATURDAY  
SEPTEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>**

**FREE ADMISSION!!**



**MEET CINDER AND  
TENDER LIVE**



**RIDES AND  
BOUNCE HOUSE  
FOOD VENDORS**

- ➡ LIVE ENTERTAINMENT**
- ➡ RAILROAD HISTORY DEMONSTRATIONS**
- ➡ DRIVE THE LOCOMOTIVE SIMULATOR**
- ➡ MODEL RAILROADS**
- ➡ MEET NORFOLK SOUTHERN REP**
- ➡ TOUR THE RAILROAD MUSEUM**

**SATURDAY  
SEPT. 23<sup>RD</sup>  
9AM – 3PM  
RICHMOND RAILROAD  
MUSEUM**

[www.RichmondRailroadMuseum.org](http://www.RichmondRailroadMuseum.org)



**102 HULL STREET  
NEAR SHOCKOE SLIP AT THE SOUTH  
END OF THE 14<sup>TH</sup> STREET (MAYO) BRIDGE**



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