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The Rio Grande Railway Preservation Corporation Reports to the Membership

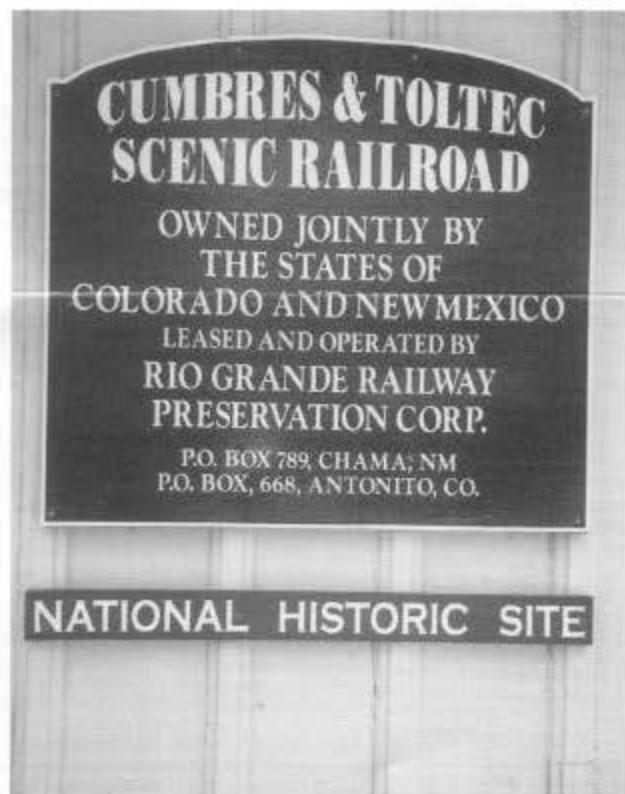
by Warren Smalley, President, Rio Grande Railway Preservation Corporation

Monday, May 15, 2000. Ed McLaughlin, General Manager, Bob Wright, Chief Mechanical Officer, and me, just after full dark on a soft spring evening in Chama, looking at the freshly outshopped 463 steaming softly: moonlight was reflecting dully off the fresh black paint and its reconditioned air compressor was "thunking" softly in its irregular beat—I began to believe that we really would run a railroad in 2000.

I thought back to late January 2000, when apparently no "for-profit" operator was going to step forward to run our railroad. The Friends were faced with a choice: either see our beloved railroad fade into the sunset of history or step up to the plate and bid to be the operator ourselves.

The rest is history. The Railroad Commission accepted our proposal and, on April 1, 2000, Rio Grande Railway Preservation Corporation (RGRPC), the operating arm of the Friends, took over the property. The RGRPC was put together with a very knowledgeable board of directors. The board members (see endnote) have had experience with both railroad and nonrailroad management, overseas as well as in the US. Our focus in 2000 was survival; learning to operate the railroad and ensuring a healthy bank balance to finance winter work.

Basically, what we inherited was a broken, run-down, physical plant in which nothing ran. One very bright spark was the shop crew, who had been working over the winter thanks to the generous contributions of the Friends. By Memorial Day 2000, we had three locomotives under steam, the blessing of the powers-that-be to run trains over the track, and a group of very excited employees. One employee came up to me during the mini work session in mid May and said, "I feel more optimistic about the future of this railroad than I have in the nine years I have worked here."



The new plaque on the Chama Depot, May 2000. (Photo by George Swain)

Unexpected Hurdles

There were some unexpected hurdles to overcome such as spending an extra \$124,000 on fire suppression due to the tinder dry forests in New Mexico and Colorado. The Forest Service threatened to shut us down at one point. We countered this threat by a personal visit to the New Mexico State Forester to advise him of our fire suppression efforts: we were using the Jordan Spreader as a bulldozer to clean all

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C&TS Dispatch

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The Friends is the official museum support group for the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, a 64-mile-long operating railroad and museum of railroad history and technology between Antonito, Colorado, and Chama, New Mexico. The railroad is owned by Colorado and New Mexico and is operated by the Rio Grande Railway Preservation Corporation. As the museum support group, the Friends is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the railroad. The Friends is an Affiliate Member of ARM (Association of Railway Museums) and a Member of TRAIN (Tourist Railway Association).

Family membership in the Friends is \$25.00 per year; outside the USA membership is \$35.00. All contributions are fully tax deductible and will be gratefully accepted. Please write us in Albuquerque or call us at (505) 880-1311 for information about the Friends. The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad is both a National and a State Registered Historic Site.

Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad



Denver & Rio Grande Railway—1880 to 1886
 Denver & Rio Grande Railroad—1886 to 1921
 Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad—1921 to 1970
 Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad—1970 to 2001
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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



In early February the governing boards of the Friends, the Rio Grande Railway Preservation Corporation (RGRPC), and the Railroad Commission met together for a two-day joint planning workshop. It is the first time such a meeting has occurred and marks the beginning of a new stage in the management of the railroad.

Rail historian and railway preservation consultant John P. Hankey (see endnote) was the workshop leader, and he began the workshop with a brief history of railway preservation and a survey of railroad museums both in the US and overseas. Placing the C&TS in this context, he emphasized that by almost any measure—number of artifacts, size of the property, number of visitors, scenic beauty of the ride, completeness, and chain of operation stretching back over 120 years—it is among the major railway heritage institutions in the country.

Cultural resource preservation, of which railway preservation is a part, is in a period of profound change with increasing public investment, professionalization of staff and procedures, and recognition of the need for planned fund development. Hankey talked about how his experiences in taking the B&O Museum from a corporate to a nonprofit museum have underscored the importance and need for institutional planning, and he cautioned that a commitment to long-range planning is essential to ensuring the long-term survival of the C&TS site.

With the help of some of the participants, we looked at issues the railroad has faced since 1970. Friends Director, historian Spencer Wilson (a former Railroad Commissioner and co-author of the Historic Preservation Study for the railroad) talked about the creation of the C&TS railroad and the experiences of its first era of operation under Scenic Railways. Dan Ranger, General Manager for Kyle Railways from 1983 to 1990 and now General Manager for the RGRPC, talked about operations during those years. Lew Entz, a Railroad Commissioner since the early 1980s, talked about the challenges of getting state funding for capital projects. Leo Schmitz, Railroad Commission Executive Director since 1982, spoke about the evolution from the early governing structure to the present commission and about the issues it has dealt with over the past 20 years.

Then we looked at our present circumstances through a self-assessment exercise called SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) commonly used in strategic planning. Prior to the meeting I had asked all participants to send me their lists for each of these categories, then I collated them and put the lists for each category on large sheets of paper that were displayed on the walls during the workshop. During the afternoon we discussed them.

highlighting the ones we thought the most important and adding others.

Out of this discussion emerged another list—of the common values and principles on which we will base our planning. As one participant phrased it, “If we had a flag to salute, what would be the ideas embodied in that flag?”

We listed support of the railroad operation for at least the next 100 years; preserve steam operation; maintain authenticity; maintain and demonstrate all cars, structures, and historic functions; preserve the “time machine” experience; articulate an institutional identity grounded in the railroad being a not-for-profit cultural resource agency; and reaffirm the twin purposes for creation of the C&TS, namely, preservation of a unique historic property and economic benefit for the region.

The second day of the workshop began with the observation that for its first 20–25 years the C&TS ran pretty well on the model of a park service concession. The states owned the property, and there was a contract operator and a support group. For the most part, the three parties functioned within their own spheres, but the parties have experienced significant changes in the last five years. There is an increasing recognition that there are areas of overlap, that there are areas of common responsibility, and that the railroad as an institution is greater than the sum of the three parts.

The more modern model that preservation projects, parks, and railroad museums now follow is a public-private partnership. Such partnerships take advantage of public ownership and the power of states while permitting the kinds of things that private groups can do that states can't do, for example, elicit donations from private donors. One of the best examples in our field is the California State Railroad Museum, where a very beneficial relationship has been worked out between the state-owned museum and the nonprofit foundation. Also, Colonial Williamsburg, Sturbridge Village, and Plymouth Plantation are examples of living history museums that have both operational and nonoperational functions, profit and

not-for-profit divisions, historic preservation functions, and utterly modern support functions (mostly unseen by visitors).

As a case study for how we might work cooperatively on planning issues, we discussed operational needs for shop space, where new facilities might be built, and how responsibility for planning and funding might be allocated.

We then identified the different areas where planning would address the ideas and concerns listed in the SWOT exercise, namely, fund development, site and space use, interpretation, curatorial management, railroad operations, risk management, institutional identity, and marketing and promotion.

We established a steering committee consisting of the Railroad Commission Executive Director (Leo Schmitz), the Friends' Executive Director (Terri Shaw), and the operations General Manager (Dan Ranger) to facilitate overall coordination and communication. We will meet at least monthly and report on our discussions to our respective boards.

During the afternoon break, participants signed up for planning areas of interest to them and committees were created for each of the areas. After the break, we established small group discussions. During the last part of the meeting, we heard reports from each of the groups.

The fund development group reported on ideas for researching and contacting foundations and other granting agencies and ideas for increasing membership in the Friends.

The site/space use group would like to have complete maps showing the railroad property and ownership of property along the right of way. The first step will be to assess what we have and what we lack. This information will be kept in the commission office. Next will be to identify the space needs for the Railroad Commission, operations, and the Friends.

The interpretation group is charged with describing the site and its history.

The group reported that in addition to developing the train host program and informational brochures, they wanted to make school and other outreach programs the next main focus. They also want to gather local histories and family stories.

The curatorial management committee will have responsibility for development of policies and standards for how equipment and structures will be protected, maintained, and used on the site; for a collections inventory; for acquisition and disposal of assets; for landscape conservation efforts; for library and archives; and for exhibitions. The group reported it will establish an electronic database to inventory and contain information about structures and rolling stock. It will pursue National Landmark status for the railroad and also develop a prioritization plan for whether or not a given piece should be used in routine operations, set aside as a museum piece, rebuilt, or replicated. The group also wants to establish a master hard-copy file for each piece of equipment and structure. Information about the work the Friends has done will be part of these files. The master files will be maintained at the commission office with copies at the Friends' library.

The risk management group said its guiding goal would be to provide accessibility to the property but keep the public safe. They will work with Dan Ranger to develop plans for emergency response and rescue and workplace safety. They will assess whether insurance coverage is sufficient.

The institutional identity committee will develop ideas to define our institution and how to represent it to others—to the legislatures, the press, colleague institutions, citizens of the state, visitors, and potential donors. The group said their near-term goals relate to advocacy at the two state legislatures. A medium-term goal is to define the railroad's institutional identity at the national level. Hankey noted that the institution has been troubled in the past few years and has had more than one identity over the past 30 years, creating a need to restate

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Railway, continued

brush from the line and on either side (the first time in years that all the sagebrush had been cut back) with the OY's tank car spraying pressurized water 30 feet on either side of the track behind the engines going up to Cumbres Pass. Additionally, on every trip, the Village of Chama's fire truck followed the train all the way up the hill.

Budgetary Goals

Thanks to a late season surge in ridership, we realized a very encouraging \$1,900,905 in revenues from train operations this past season. This is especially encouraging because the railroad achieved its budgetary goals. We spent \$270,000 on shop work, putting locomotives 463, 487, 489, and 497 back into operation. Approximately \$158,000 was covered by state appropriations and RGRPC funded the remaining \$111,000.

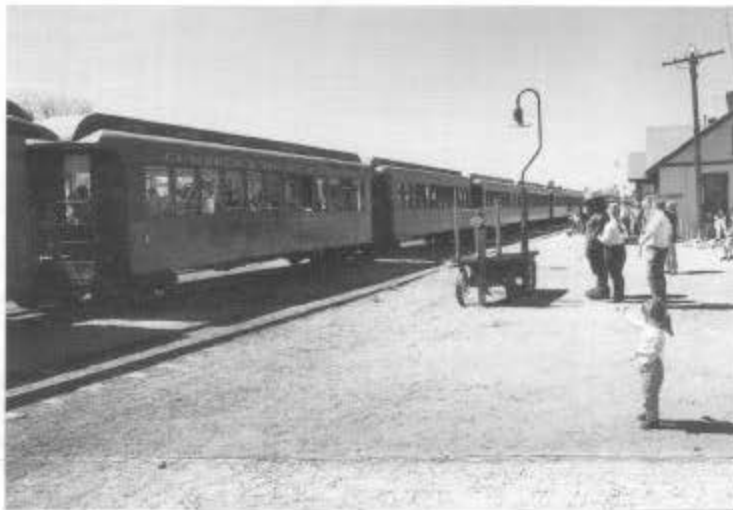
These figures are in addition to the approximately \$150,000 spent by the Railroad Commission and the Friends for locomotive restoration work prior to April 1, 2000. The revenue performance does represent a decline of about 10% compared to previous seasons for which we have reliable data (i.e., 1995 to 1998). Three reasons for this decline are the fire danger mentioned above, high gasoline prices, and some carry-over negative publicity from the previous operating season.

Fortunately, due in no small part to the extra effort of employees, lots of volunteer help from the Friends, tight budgetary controls, and the good will of virtually everyone, the railroad was able to end the season with \$310,000 in the bank. With these funds, plus receivables in state and federal funding for locomotive and track work, RGRPC expects to spend over \$850,000 by Memorial Day 2001 for off-season programs to continue track rebuilding,

locomotive restoration, and marketing, training, and administrative programs in preparation for the season.

Passengers

We opened on schedule and operated all season with 50,216 riders, 35 caboose charters, and four railfan trip specials. This was exactly what we had targeted. While it was not the railroad's best season ever, it is remarkable the trains ran at all, and for the most part, on time!



Off we go—Opening Day, Saturday, May 27, 2000. A young railfan and Smokey the Bear wave the train off. (Photo by Tom Cardin)

By terminal, 36% of riders originated their journey in Antonito, and 60% of our passengers passed through the Antonito terminal at some point (either originating, terminating, or via one of our buses). 64% of our passengers originated their journey in Chama, 80% passed through the Chama terminal, and 50% changed trains at Osier.

New Mexico and Colorado were almost even in ridership origination at 20% each. Texas had 15% and "other" was 45%. International ridership was less than 1%, and 8% were children. Over half of the ridership booked a week or less in advance—30% of all tickets were sold the day before travel or on the actual day of travel with no prior reservation.

The Hard Work of Many

Our success is due to the hard work done by three parties:

The C&TS Railroad Commission was successful in obtaining state and federal funding and keeping a shop crew working during the 1999–2000 winter. This was crucial to ensure that the railroad operated last year and that equipment and track were improved.

The C&TS employees are our greatest strength. They worked very hard to keep equipment maintained, return out-of-service equipment to service, and teach a new management team the ins and outs of the railroad.

The Friends of the C&TS are truly a remarkable group of people, who donated time and money to keep the railroad operating. For example, the railroad benefited immeasurably from the intensive volunteer work done by the Friends last spring to repair the passenger coaches that were in a truly wretched state. The Friends and our Executive Director are actively working to raise more money in state, federal, and private grants. That,

plus increased ridership and our strong volunteer efforts, will enable us to raise the railroad and its museum heritage to new levels.

RGRPC offers our thanks to all of you. We also offer our thanks to the citizens of Antonito and Chama who donated money to the Friends, made special efforts on behalf of the employees, or offered moral support.

Regional and National Publicity

The C&TS and the Friends were profiled in Time magazine in March, in Newsweek magazine in July, and in Southern Living magazine in November. This national coverage was in addition to the extensive coverage by regional newspapers and television. The Friends and the RGRPC have spent approximately \$250,000 in the past year marketing and advertising the



railroad. Approximately 70% of this figure is explicitly aimed at the out-of-state market through travel guides, brochure distribution, and other purchases.

Off-Season Plan

We have outlined a very ambitious off-season plan and one that will exhaust all available funding, but it does show that the operation is successfully moving from survival mode to full recovery and beyond. By this spring, the Chama shop expects to have two more locomotives rebuilt and operational—484 and 488—and to have performed further rebuilding of the running gear on 463 and 487. The Antonito shop has a full program underway for restoration of passenger coaches, including conversion of two cars to parlor car service. Weather permitting, intensive efforts to upgrade track and right-of-way under the current EDA grant will continue. Most importantly, with the successful completion of the 2000 season, RGRPC is now in a position to launch a series of sales and marketing initiatives designed to enhance customer service and increase revenue.

Future Plans

We will turn our efforts to improving customer service. Keys to this will be to improve the experience at Osier. First priority is to reduce the time spent waiting in line for lunch. Our goal is to have a maximum wait time of 15 minutes on days when ridership is 400 or less. Layout changes in the dining facility are being studied. One of the ways we plan to improve service at Osier is by offering a second Chama trip during peak periods. During July and the fall color season, we hope to schedule a second Chama departure for 10:45 a.m. This will smooth the flow of customers through the Osier dining hall. This schedule is contingent upon availability of equipment (i.e., motive power and certain track configurations).

Parlor car service will be introduced at the beginning of the 2001 season. Open seating, complimentary snacks, and attendant service will be provided.

Dinner trains from Chama to Osier, also boarding at Cumbres, will be offered on July 7, August 4, and September 1 and 2. Riders will be treated to an outdoor barbecue and entertainment with an "old West" theme provided in partnership with one or more of the dude ranches in the Conejos Valley.

Fares: Fares will increase about 5% on certain trips and not on others. This will result in an overall increase of about 3.8%. New fares will be \$40 Antonito to Osier and return, \$60 one way with bus back. Our fares compare very favorably with those of other all-day tourist railroads in the Southwest. The Durango and Silverton narrow-gauge railroad charges \$53 for an all-train itinerary to Silverton and return and

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\$58 including return by bus. The Grand Canyon Railway charges \$49 for a round trip in coach, \$69 in club, and \$119 in deluxe club. Comparing us to other shorter train rides is difficult but we still compare favorably. The Royal Gorge route offers a 90-minute trip for \$24.50. Georgetown Loop offers a one-hour ride at \$12.95. Finally, an all-day pass at Six Flags, Elitch Gardens in Denver, costs \$32.99.

Thank You!

We owe a great deal of thanks to Ed McLaughlin, our first General Manager under the RGRPC. He assembled a very knowledgeable team including Bob Wright, who actually worked on our locomotives as an apprentice in the Alamosa shops and Bill Collins, Track & Roadbed Consultant and EDA Track Grant Coordinator. Both gentlemen have many years of experience in their respective areas of expertise on main

lines, as well as tourist lines. Ed got us up and running, and the railroad basically ran on time all year long. Having proved he could do it, Ed has gone back to his family in Salt Lake City, but will be doing special projects for us from time to time and is still on our Advisory Council.

Dan Ranger, our new General Manager, probably needs no introduction to many of you. He was General Manager of the railroad from 1983 to 1990 and is well known by the staff.

Experience teaches that teamwork is the most efficient and successful way of achieving long-term goals. You will recall there were some magnificent TV shots during the Rose Bowl parade of several large teams of horses pulling floats. Their synchronized team efforts were smoother than any motorized float. Through the Friends of the C&TS, the Railroad Commission, the RGRPC, and our employees, along with the support of the communities of Chama and Antonito, we have the horses to not only survive but to thrive in 2001 and beyond.

December 9, 2000: Riding through Christmas card scenery in the observation gondola on the Christmas Train special out of Chama behind the 497 as it plowed through 12 inches of new-fallen snow, pushing it to each side like the bow wave on a ship. I gave thanks for being part of the great effort that saved the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad.

Endnote: Members of the RGRPC Board of Directors are Warren Smalley, President, Albuquerque, NM, insurance executive; John West, Vice President, Mill Valley, CA, retired from national and international rail industry management; Geof Gordon, Secretary, Pueblo West, CO, retired from CEO of a multinational manufacturing company; Dick Cowles, Treasurer, Santa Fe, NM, expert in capital market infrastructure; Joe Vigil, Chama, NM, former General Manager, C&TS; John Craft, Atlanta, GA, business consultant for national and international information technology projects. 🍀

PRESERVATION PERSPECTIVE: NO. 20



The Jordan spreader clears a wide swath along the track on June 5, 2000, as part of the railroad's extensive fire prevention measures this past year. The work extra also included engine 487 and caboose 05635. (Photo by Tom Cardin)

Cats Do Have Nine Lives

by Keith E. Hayes, AIA

The year 2000 operating season presented many new challenges to the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, the least of which was starting a new affiliated organization in anticipation of getting the railroad up and running on several months notice. Last year many words were devoted to the 30th anniversary of the C&TS: what is remarkable about last summer is that there was a complete railroad to operate.

During the late 1960s, the D&RGW was looking to rid itself of 400 miles of an anachronistic steam railroad—the last in the nation. This was a complete operation with passing sidings, depots, 23 locomotives, over 400 freight and passenger cars, and some 100 maintenance-of-way vehicles, plus many, many odds and ends. The fact that the line between Chama and Antonito was singled out to be saved is unique. And that the Rio Grande was willing to part with some key rolling stock, while maintaining the Silverton line, was even more provident.

Most rail lines preserved and operated for the benefit of the tourist today are

fragments of fragments of railroads. They operate with the leftovers, the survivors, and the cast-offs of their corporate heritage. I say "most rail lines" here, as I am sure readers will write of an exception or five, but an example that comes to mind is a spur or branch of 3 to 30 miles purchased from a railroad and operated with a locomotive and three coaches that were rescued from another line. The depot was moved from its historic location, and the train has to run with the locomotive in reverse for half the trip for lack of turning facilities at the opposite end of the line. The description is fiction, but serves to illustrate that the C&TS is a complete railroad.

While the railroad is itself a fragment of the larger D&RGW, it does serve as a microcosm of the whole. There are several depots and section house sites, water tanks, a half-dozen passing sidings, and as many places to turn a locomotive. The point is, while most visitors to the C&TS don't realize it, all of these features are necessary to operate the railroad. They may not be used every day, maybe but once a season, but they are important. The past year highlighted the need for places like the Big Horn wye and Lobato siding. Both locations rarely

see more than a single passing train at a time but they had starring roles when operations last summer required their use.

Perhaps the most unforeseen event of the 2000 operating season was the use of the Jordan spreader OU, one of those key pieces of rolling stock. The Southwest was reeling from increased fire danger due to a dry spring, and the railroad was encouraged by the Forest Service to find ways—including not running trains—to decrease the fire hazard. Thus, OU was moved to the shop, lubricated, and placed into service, clearing brush on either side of the track across the entire railroad—one of the uses for which the machine was purchased. Evidence of this maintenance was still visible in August when I rode the line: mile after mile of brush and stumps moved well away from the roadbed with a neatly plowed furrow of earth and rock in between.

The operation of OU is a reminder of what the C&TS is about. Thirty years ago, a number of individuals worked to preserve a piece of what railroading once was. That is not to dismiss the steam locomotives and the skill of the professionals who maintain and operate the railroad. But the summer of 2000 was a reminder that some of those rusty sidings and odd pieces of equipment can come in handy in a bind!

Keith is a long-time volunteer and a licensed architect practicing in Denver, Colorado. His column has appeared regularly in the C&TS Dispatch since 1995.

Registration Packets

Members who did not receive a purple flyer in their membership renewal letter or who didn't return it to the Albuquerque office, may request a registration packet for this summer's volunteer work sessions by contacting the office at (505) 880-1311.

Report from the Project Planning Committee

by Roger Breeding

Volunteer Work Sessions for 2001

As usual, the bulk of our work in 2001 will be the continuation of projects begun in previous years. In Antonito, we will continue the restoration of caboose 0579 and flat car 6708. At Osier and Cumbres, the restoration of the section houses will continue. At Cumbres, the crew plans to take a few hours away from the section house to repair the speeder shed on the other side of the tracks to the east. In Chama, the continuing projects are car painting and lettering, the coal tipple, running gear repairs, the stock pens, tree trimming, milepost painting, and refrigerator cars 55 and 163. We also will continue the gardening, landscaping, and weed abatement program that has been so well received.

Terry Ryder, having completed rebuilding flanger OL, plans to start on flanger OK. Roy Blizzard and Tony Kassim, having rebuilt the rail and tie car and the wheel and tie car in the last several years, plan to start on a more complex task—the complete rebuilding of a drop-bottom gondola (#727). Dave Ferro plans to lead a project to rebuild two of the old Fairmont speeders. If all goes well, we might eventually be able to get a third speeder out of all the bodies, engines, and miscellaneous parts that are scattered about the yard. It is envisioned that these speeders, although being historically accurate restorations, will be used during work sessions to transport the milepost painting and the tree trimming crews out to their work sites. This would take the pressure off the operator's limited supply of speeders.

A new project will be the conversion of one of the boxcar coaches back to a boxcar. Because there are several boxcar coaches that haven't been used in years and are in deplorable condition, now is an appropriate time to begin their conversion back to boxcars. There is a shortage of boxcars that can be run in freight trains since so many of them are used for storage. Another new project is the placing of siding on

the exterior of charter caboose 05635. Converted from a stock car during the Scenic Railway years, we are assisting the railroad in upgrading its appearance. We will also begin the restoration of the telephone booths located along the line. With the cooperation of the operator, we plan a major effort to clean up the Chama site and remove decades of accumulated junk. It has not been

decided yet whether this will take place in the May or June or both sessions. The building paint crew will be painting several structures in Chama this year.

Considerable effort will be expended this year to making the old car shop near the east end of the yard into our woodworking shop. A roving carpenter crew will be asked to attend to all those little carpentry jobs that always seem to slip between the cracks of the bigger projects. This year we would like to get the flammable fluids (gasoline, lubricants, paints, etc.) out of the various boxcars they have been stored in for years and move them to a more appropriate storage location. Where this structure will be located has not been determined at this time. Finally, we will be planning and installing exhibits and interpretative displays.

Of course, none of these projects could take place without all the support activities that make our work sessions possible. There is the tool car, of course, and the preparation of the generators, compressors, etc. before the first work session. And the supplies and equipment for Cumbres and Osier have to be sent out before the first work session and put away after the last day of work. There is the video, still photography, and written documentation of our work, and administration and registration. Last, but I know certainly not least for all of us, are the wonderful lunches we get every day to help us make it through the afternoon.

Roger is co-chair, with Jerry Sahnd, of the Project Planning Committee. He is also a Friends director. 🍷



Los Pinos telephone booth at MP 322.95, one of five remaining along the line. A new Friends' project will be the restoration of the booths. (Photo by Art Nichols)

ELECTION PROCEDURES

In accordance with our bylaws, in this issue of the C&TS Dispatch we are publishing a description of our Board of Directors election procedures. Article Six of the bylaws provides that our members shall elect directors—and nine of the eighteen seats on the board are up for election this year.

Nominations for election to the board are made by the nominating committee or by petition. The five (5) member nominating committee is appointed by the board, and its duty is to nominate nine (9) qualified candidates. Additional candidates may be nominated by petition. A petition for nomination shall contain the name of the nominee, the nominee's consent to serve, the seconding signatures of three (3) voting members, brief biographical information about the nominee, and the nominee's statement of candidacy.

The board will appoint the nominating committee at its meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on March 24, 2001. Interested candidates should contact any officer, director, or member of the nominating committee to express an interest in serving on the board. All nominations by petition must be received by our Albuquerque office by Thursday, April 26, 2001. Elections shall take place by written ballots that will be mailed by Thursday, May 10, 2001. To be counted, ballots must be received by our Albuquerque office by Thursday, June 7, 2001 (15 days before the annual meeting in Chama on Friday, June 22, 2001).

NARROW GAUGE NEAR AND FAR: NO. 19

A Narrow-Gauge Engineer's Guide to Survival, Part 2

by Earl G. Knoob

The first part of this article on operating the C&TS locomotives appeared in the winter 2000 issue.

Running Up to Cumbres

Running up the steep side of Cumbres—despite what one might observe—is actually a fairly simple process. The throttle is run wide open and the reverse lever is moved forward to the point where the locomotive will create the power to move the train at the desired speed. However, running the reverse lever one or two notches too far ahead will result in losing water or steam (or both). When running at a normal pace of 10–11 mph, the reverse lever is never more than 9 notches ahead of center (Rule of Thumb: Find the highest notch in which the engine will run, then add 5 notches). Most days one will run in the 6–7 notch range, reserving the lower notches for heavy, one-engine trains. A very important point to remember is that as the speed comes up, so does the reverse lever, otherwise, your fireman will think rather poorly of you (how is that for “Grand Understatement”?).

Some of my worst firing trips were on relatively light doubleheaders where the engineer “ran her in the same notch I did yesterday.” The difference was, however, yesterday he had a heavy train and made 11 mph, today, he had a much lighter train and made 15 mph. I managed to keep steam up. However, despite the injector running at maximum all the way up the hill, the water got too low and the engineer’s injector had to be used, which knocked the steam down. Bad day. I was not happy and, yes, I did think rather poorly of my engineer. This inspired me to tell the enginemen I trained “If you have to run both injectors to keep the water up, you are trying to beat the locomotive and the fireman into the ground!” (I can see the e-mail virtual sneers coming from my former co-enginemen even as I write this.)

Running westbound from Antonito to Cumbres requires considerably more skill and finesse. The first 20 miles from Antonito to Big Horn are a very constant 1.42%. If you have a decent sized train (8 cars or more), it is possible to set the reverse lever in the “company notch” (the highest notch the engine will run well, giving the best fuel and water economy). Set the throttle, sit back, and enjoy the ride. Listen to the engine do its work.

From Big Horn west, the grade is a series of stair steps and fairly constant throttle adjustment is necessary. Oddly enough, in the most rugged part of the railroad, there are over 8 miles of level track from just east of Rock Tunnel to MP 323.5 (east of Los Pinos). The railroad climbs only 6 feet in this distance. In reality, it probably gains and loses it several times, but it is possible to set the throttle and leave it for a few miles at a time.

Braking and Controlling Downhill Speed

So far, we’ve covered the easy part. More important, however, than getting the train moving and keeping it going, is getting it stopped and controlling its speed on long, downhill grades. The locomotives have two brake valves: the small brake valve is the independent brake, which controls the brakes on the locomotive and tender. The larger valve is the automatic brake valve, which sets and releases the train brakes, as well as the locomotive and tender brakes. When operating the locomotive without a train, or when switching, the independent brake is used. When running on the road with a train, the automatic brake is utilized.

Running down hill is a totally different art form. One has to be constantly aware of small speed changes, changes in grade, and the presence of curves, all of which affect how a train rolls down grade. Curves are a great help in holding the train back on the steep grades, as are short sags. On the east side of Cumbres, frequent and light (5 pounds or less) sets and releases are

done. It takes longer for the brakes to release after they set than it does to set them. Therefore, it becomes a balancing act of setting and releasing.

An engineer soon becomes aware of 1 mph changes in speed and subtle changes in how the train pulls on the tender. It is necessary to learn every curve and tangent on the railroad, especially between Osier and Big Horn. The stair-step profile requires constant vigilance and knowledge of where to set and where to release the brakes, where to pull the train and where to let it drift.

Controlling slack action in the train is an important skill. Within the couplers and draft gear of each car are 6 to 9 inches of free slack. In starting a 20-car train with the slack bunched, the head end will move about 15 feet before the rear end does. As a train rolls down grade, the train will bunch up against the locomotive, as the cars will roll the easiest. Setting the brakes will stretch the train out. A rapid run out of slack damages draft gear, puts passengers on the floor, knocks coffeepots over in the snack car, etc. By using light, short sets and releases, the train stays stretched, as the brakes are not released long enough to allow the consist to bunch up.

Pulling the train stretches it from the front to the back. Braking the train stretches it from the back to the front. Slowing the train or starting down grade, the brakes are set before the throttle is closed, keeping the train stretched. Much depends on the engineer’s ability to judge where the slack is in his train. Passenger cars on the C&TS are former freight equipment and lack tightlock couplers and spring-loaded buffers between the cars to smooth out the slack action. Visiting engineers who work with “real” passenger equipment are often amazed with the smooth ride we give to the trains we pull.

Dropping down the 4% grade from Cumbres to Chama is not that different once you get used to it and once you understand the ominous fact that if you



make a mistake, it could kill you or your precious cargo. All the retainer valves are set on the cars. These valves hold air pressure in the brake cylinders when the brakes are released, allowing the engineer to release and recharge the brake system. Normally, 10–13 pound sets are made. After the set slows the train a bit, the brakes are released and recharged. As the air is slowly released out of the brake cylinder through the retainer valve, the train will stop slowing, hold its speed, and then begin to speed up. The tricky part is to reset the brakes before the speed rises, but allow time for the brakes to recharge. There is a delay before a set becomes evident in slowing the train. Sometimes, one has to have patience and faith that the set will take hold. Making a set too hard will cause the train to slow too rapidly. Releasing the brakes too soon will cause the need for a reset before they can recharge. Not getting a full recharge will cause the next set to use more air to achieve the same results. If this continues, eventually the train “runs out of air” and runs away down the grade. Therefore, maintaining the delicate balance is extremely important.

All in all, nothing beats knowing the road you’re running on and the equipment you are operating. It is impossible to relate anything but a small portion of what one needs to get a train across a serious mountain railroad like the Cumbres and Toltec. In the 17 years I ran there, I was always learning a new way to do something. As the late Ben Greathouse used to say, “The day you stop learning is the day you retire.” No truer words were ever spoken.

Earl is a consulting director of the Friends and a former Superintendent of Operations of the C&TS. His column has appeared regularly in the C&TS Dispatch since 1995. (Editor’s note: In the winter 2000 issue, I incorrectly identified the locomotive cab shown on page 8 as 497’s. It is the cab of 489.)

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Locomotives 489, 497, and 487 (behind 489) outside the Chama engine house, July 1996. (Photo by Art Nichols)

President's Column, continued

the goals and vision of the project. He observed that the idea of education and outreach kept resurfacing in our discussions. We are beginning to envision the C&TS as a preservation, operations, and education institution.

The marketing and promotion group described the advertising campaign for the coming year and noted that more remains to be done. The focus is that the railroad is a place to experience history and not just a train ride. Continuing to develop interpretation at all the sites is needed to fulfill this idea.

At the end of the workshop, the participants all agreed that the planning process had been very beneficial and that we should meet like this at least once a year. But the harder work now begins. For many of the committees their first activities will be to gather data and assess needs. It will be the task of the steering committee to work with each of the committees to establish goals and timetables for their work.

I'm excited about this process. The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad is a special place for which the Railroad Commissioners and Friends Directors bear a responsibility and a mission.

And we will work with the ideas developed in this planning meeting to give the railroad the kind of protection and support it needs to be a place where 100 years from now visitors can see authentic mountain steam railroading.

We welcome the involvement of Friends members outside the Board to help us carry this planning process forward. If you are interested in any of the areas we have defined, please get in touch with me.

Endnote: John P. Hankey's experience encompasses both the operational side of railroading (five years of engine service on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad) as well as museum management (former chief Curator of the B&O Museum). His academic studies have focused on the history of technology, labor and work, and transportation, and his current research at the University of Chicago examines railroads in relation to public perceptions of technology. He has been a consultant to museums, historical societies, historic preservation projects, and film/television/radio documentary projects. Members may have seen his articles in Locomotive & Railway Preservation, Vintage Rails, and Trains magazines.

—Terri Shaw 🍀

Yard and Train Hosts: A Vital Update

by Spencer Wilson

In the spring 1999 issue of the C&TS Dispatch, we described the Yard and Train Host Program as "An Idea Whose Time Has Come!" Now we are embarked on an expanded, functioning, program of volunteers riding the trains and working the yards to reach as many of the visitors and passengers as possible. And we are reaching them, with more volunteer train hosts and many more new members for the Friends as a result of the volunteers' enthusiasm. Since 1997, Howard Bunté, founder of the program, has led us into a new dimension.

In those first few years, the train hosts were active only during the work sessions or on opening day. During the 2000 season, however, the program expanded dramatically. We covered about 60 to 70 per cent of the scheduled trains, with some other special moments thrown in. This was a very impressive contribution in light of the "Crisis of Year 2000." Perhaps it was because of the crisis that so many more volunteers came forward to work the trains and yards.

One very significant contribution in 2000 was in the numbers of new members signed up on the trains or in the yards by the hosts. There was a flurry of new members enlisting—an estimated 300 plus—as reported by Judy Lock in the home office. The hosts, of course, were handed a major drawing card in July when the new Walking Tour Brochure was published. The enthusiastic reaction of visitors was a joy to behold upon their opening the brochure. As an additional benefit, our continued "open door policy" added to that universal comment—"We can walk around and even go into buildings?" Needless to say, the hosts offered cautionary words about being careful and "Do not argue with the locomotives—they will win!" In addition, speaking from personal experience, accompanying the folks with a guided tour produced marked effects—and not a few of those became new members.



Train Hosts Frank Yockey, Joanne Yockey, and Carol Salisbury ready to greet the passengers on the morning train out of Chama, June 16, 1999. (Photo by Tom Cardin)

A case in point is the brochures in the hands of the train hosts. A young Swiss couple who visited the C&TS, Herr Doktor Professor (biology) und Herren Robert Furrer of Sempach, Switzerland, joined the Friends after returning home. We sent them one of the new brochures; it hadn't been published when they visited the railroad. Robert promptly offered to translate the brochure into German. He has done so and the German edition should be available by next season. The brochure is being translated into Spanish, and we have hopes for a Japanese edition. These are the three most popular languages according to the New Mexico Visitor Center on Interstate 25 south of Santa Fe.

There are a "host" of similar stories (no pun intended) from the train hosts as we meet and talk with our public. Last September, Bruce Williams of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, sent Howard Bunté his manuscript "Reflections of a Train Docent [Host] During Training." Here are some of his observations.

At the orientation meeting on Sunday afternoon, Frank Yockey stressed being positive. I suspect we can add polite and courteous since long after they forget that Cascade

Trestle is 137 feet high or that 487's tender holds 5000 gallons of water, passengers will remember if the staff was friendly.

Humor can be a quick and pleasurable way to connect with strangers. Yet I don't want to come off as flip. So I hope I didn't offend the retired IBM gentleman who referred to "real trains out of Denver" as a preface to his question when I corrected him by noting [that] he was on a real train. I think he intended standard gauge or non-tourist when he said "real." He and his traveling companions did take my suggestion about riding the entire line rather than merely an Osier turn in order to experience the variety offered by the whole route. By mid-afternoon there were smiles and laughs when I mentioned REAL cinders, REAL rain, and REAL wet, so I think things were cool between us but one never knows for sure. My parting comment was: "It's been a real pleasure having you ride today." I hope he knew I meant it.

While passing between cars I notice a middle-aged couple on the vestibule doing some prolonged and serious swapping of chewing gum from close range. Although they are oblivious to the surrounding scenery or the historical significance of what we just passed, no need to ask them if they are

enjoying the trip. That would only demonstrate my inability to grasp the obvious.

One trip I met a fellow who could be the Marlboro Man's older brother. Given his weathered face, it appears that for every hour I have spent in the office, he's spent five out on the range. [He] told me he wanted to see from the train what he had heretofore only viewed from the saddle as he used to bring cattle to Osier on horseback. He also told me he became a widower in January after 40 years of marriage. It's obviously a tender topic, so I express my sympathy and let him choose the direction for our conversation. For a man who has known outdoor work in rugged conditions, he is very soft-spoken, considerate, and humble, though he's quite knowledgeable about the area, its weather, and livestock.

What happens if I don't get certified as a docent [Host]? Do I get bumped to freight service?

Upon learning I am from Iowa, some passengers ask if we have these back home as they point to the nearby mountains. "Yes," I reply and then quickly add, "except ours are all flat!"

Bruce ended with thanks to members of the Friends and the employees "who greatly contributed to the efforts to try and train me. Their knowledge, friendliness, patience, openness, concern for safety, good-naturedness, and humor delightfully enhanced a unique and memorable week for me. Now, was it Mud Tunnel or Rock Tunnel that is 360 feet long? Hmm... where are those fact sheets?"

Memorable comments for the memorable experience of being a Yard and Train Host on the C&TS. Come join us! Howard Bunté would like to hear from you if you're interested in joining or would like more information about the Yard and Train Host team. Training sessions can be scheduled at times other than during the volunteer work sessions. Write Howard at the Friends office: 5732 Osuna Rd. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109.

Spencer is past-president of the Historical Society of New Mexico and a former member of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad Commission. He is a Friends director. ✎

BOOK REVIEW

by Spencer Wilson

Riding the Rails: Teenagers on the Move During the Great Depression, by Errol Lincoln Uys, TV Books, New York, NY, 1999.

Perhaps the two dominant events in American, if not world, history in the 20th Century were World War II and the Great Depression. This book is about the Depression and the effect it had on the youth during the 1930s. This work is the outgrowth of a television documentary "Riding the Rails," which drew primarily on letters and oral histories of three thousand men and women who hopped freight trains in search of jobs, food, shelter, and, in a few instances, adventure. These three thousand were only a fraction of the estimated two hundred and fifty thousand teenage "hoboes" who roamed America between 1929 and the outbreak of World War II. Of course, it was that war which ended the Depression.

These are first-hand accounts drawn from the mass of information collected by the producers of the documentary and this companion book.

Most of the stories are of youngsters from ten years onward, driven from home by the mass unemployment caused by the stock market crash and failed businesses nationwide and worldwide. Poignant accounts of young boys, some girls who traveled incognito, and African-Americans, all facing the dangers of riding freight trains with strangers, especially the African-Americans. Some were killed and never identified. Almost all left home without a word beforehand, and some finally did return after federal-state programs alleviated the worst of the effects of the Depression. The Civilian Conservation Corps was one of the best such programs. Many survivors later went on to distinguished careers, feeling that the experience had strengthened them to the rigors of life and, especially, military service. Almost all claimed to retain their faith in the future—and most proved it in later life. There was even one African-American who ultimately attended the University of New Mexico Anderson Business School.

A beautifully researched book reminding us of a dark period in our history.

Reprinted from the April 2000 issue of "Book Talk," the newsletter of the New Mexico Book League. ☞

Donors to the Ralph Flowers and the Mike Hipskind Memorial Funds

February 12, 2001

The following names should be added to the list of donors given in the Spring and Summer 2000 issues. (*Donors to both funds.)

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2001 Schedule of Friends' Events

May 7-11, Monday-Friday
May 14-18, Monday-Friday
Pre-Season Volunteer Work Sessions

May 26, Saturday
Opening Day

June 18-22, Monday-Friday
Volunteer Work Session A

June 22, Friday
Annual Meeting

June 23, Saturday
Friends Railfan Extra

June 25-29, Monday-Friday
Volunteer Work Session B

August 4, Saturday
Thirteenth Annual Moonlight Train

August 6-10, Monday-Friday
Volunteer Work Session C

August 13-17, Monday-Friday
Volunteer Work Session D



Santa Claus (Tom Cardin) was delivered by Chama Fire Chief Felix Gallegos to Lobo crossing on Saturday, December 9, where Santa boarded the annual Santa Train. Mrs. Claus was on the train and with Santa handed out candy canes to everyone. When the train arrived back in Chama, hot cider, hot chocolate, and homemade cookies were in the depot for the passengers. The Santa Train also ran the next day. (Photo by Mary Cardin)



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