

January 8, 2007

Hello, Steam Team:

Steam Passenger Trains on the B & O: In the early 1930's, taking my cousin Eleanor and me to school at 4th & West Streets in Wilmington, my father would often stop at Mac's Texaco filling station at Pennsylvania Avenue and Union Street, which was 50 yards from the overpass on the B & O Railroad's main line. As we were stopped, a morning passenger train headed south (or west as the B & O called it) would often be pulling away from Delaware Avenue Station with a 4-6-2 Pacific "President Class" locomotive on the front end. On the side of the cab would be lettered "President Washington" or whatever president it turned out to be and it was great fun to see how many "Presidents" we could see in a certain period of time. I think there were 24 locomotives in this Class, and they were numbered from 5300 up. In 1936, I went to Washington during spring vacation with Dave Creighton and the YMCA for a wonderful 3 days. We went down on the newly-electrified Pennsylvania Railroad, with its brand new GG-1 locomotives pulling the passenger trains. Coming home, however, we rode the Royal Blue on the B & O, still pulled by a fast steam locomotive. The whole train including the locomotive was painted dark blue, and there was modest streamlining on the locomotive, which had been modified from one of the 24 "Presidents". There was a nifty (cool) buffet car on the train with a friendly black attendant in a white coat who served us cherry-vanilla ice cream behind a counter running the length of the car. "Nothing could be finer".

In 1950, I was a young travel agent and steam was almost gone from the B & O. It was still 8 years before passenger service was abandoned north (or east) of Baltimore, but except for a local train from Philadelphia to Washington in the morning and the same returning in late afternoon, all passenger trains were pulled by Diesel locomotives. Clarence Miller was the city ticket agent for the B & O in Wilmington and Matt Minker (father of the builder and Blue Rocks owner) was his assistant. I asked them if I could get a pass to ride the cab of the steam locomotive pulling these locals from Wilmington to Washington and back. Although Mr. Miller could not understand why I would want to ride these dirty old things, he arranged for the pass on Saturday, July 15, 1950. I was standing at the front of the platform at Delaware Avenue Station when the train from Philadelphia pulled in at 8:30, right on time. I climbed into the cab, handed my papers to the engineer, and he and the fireman welcomed me and told me where to stand out of their way. Just before they braked for the stop at Newark, the speedometer read 86 m.p.h. After Newark, our stops were Elk Mills, Aiken, Aberdeen, Mount Royal Station (Baltimore), Camden Station, Elk Ridge, Laurel, and Union Station in Washington. At the west end of the Susquehanna River bridge, there was a sharp curve and I thought the locomotive was going to upset when we hit that curve at

some speed, but apparently it was routine, as the other two in the cab paid no attention to it. A couple miles farther, the fireman climbed atop the coal pile in the tender, and lowered a water scoop. We were passing over a water trough between the rails, probably a mile long. Water flew out to both sides all over the place (it was said that these scoops, devised to save time in taking on water, were not more than 50% efficient). The scoop seemed to retract on its own as we reached the end of the trough, and we soon stopped at Aberdeen. At Mount Royal Station in Baltimore, the engineer edged forward very slowly before making his final stop for passengers to get on or off. I soon realized he was lining up the cab window with a heavily-worn stick projecting from the stone wall alongside; at this point the spout from a water tower near the track was exactly opposite the lid for the tender tank. After taking on water, we drifted through the mile-long Howard Street Tunnel to Camden Station. The rest of the trip to Washington was uneventful.

The one thing of especial interest on the return was the navigation through the Baltimore tunnels. At Camden Station, a small electric locomotive was coupled on ahead of the steam engine. This helper engine pulled the train up grade at slow speed through the long Howard Street Tunnel and into Mount Royal Station, but it did not cut off there. There were more short tunnels beyond Mount Royal, and it worked us through those as well. After these tunnels were cleared and without stopping the train, the coupler pin was pulled and the electric locomotive moved rapidly ahead of the steam engine (which was then moving the train at about 10 m.p.h.) and was switched off onto a side track, whereby the switch was returned to the mainline track, the engineer of the steam locomotive pulled back on the throttle lever, and the train lunged ahead with sharp staccato barks from the exhaust as it headed for Wilmington and Philadelphia.

About 1955, I was working after 5:30 in the travel office when I heard the sharp bark of a steam locomotive picking up speed. I looked at my watch and it HAD to be the Royal Blue climbing the grade toward Philadelphia from its Wilmington stop. It was 5:37 and the flagship train on the line, competing with the PRR's Congressional, was due at Wilmington at 5:32. The next day I told Clarence Miller there was a steam engine on the Royal Blue last night. He said that couldn't be, that they could never make the schedule. It may have been an emergency, and the very last time, but a great Pacific of the 5300 class was pulling the Royal Blue!

I offer a sincere apology to several of our new members who will be receiving their first "Weekly News" with this issue. It has taken entirely too long to get you on our E-mail list to receive these weekly bulletins. No matter how hard we try to be accurate, a few of your names fell through the cracks. If you would like to see what you may have missed, please reply by E-mail, and I'll send you an attachment giving the subjects covered over a 23-month period since the

homely anecdotes were started. We treasure your membership and regret that this happened during the past two months.

I have committed the Friends to several mid-winter promotional opportunities, and we will need volunteers to make these things happen. First, the Newark Senior Center sponsors an annual Awareness Day on Friday, February 9, from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M., when they invite non-profit groups such as ours to take a table to promote their activities. We will need one or more volunteers to set up and be present at this table. Second, the AACA Museum in Hershey has asked FAHP to participate with them in the program they present at one of the seminars at the AACA Annual Meeting, and Bob Reilly is working up a DVD presentation to last about 20 minutes. We don't know whether this will be on Friday, Feb. 9, or on Saturday morning, the 10th. Third, Mike Jones has invited us to take a booth at the trade show adjoining the Annual Meeting activities in the Wyndham-Franklin Plaza Hotel in Philadelphia on February 9 and 10, and AACA will waive the usual \$200 fee for same. They would be pleased if we can have a Stanley car next to our booth, as one of the cars featured in the trade show. The car must be taken in on Thursday, Feb. 8, and will come home on Sunday, the 11th. Bob Reilly and I will be available to help with all these things, but as you can see several others will be needed to cover all bases and times. It should be obvious that these are excellent opportunities for us to get our organization and its activities in front of many interested people.

I am pleased with the progress toward making our working groups effective, and several group leaders have E-mailed their group members and are setting up times to settle in on the projects ahead. The first such meeting was called by Richard Bernard for this Tuesday, January 9 (Outdoor Improvements group). The sooner all these groups can meet and settle on some projects, the easier it will be to come up with an accurate expense-side budget for 2007. Bill Enslen is planning a Finance Committee meeting on January 23, and there is an Events Committee meeting on January 25, both to be held in FAHP's office above the garage. Meanwhile, Jerry Lucas and the Nominating Committee continue to work on Board candidates to be nominated at the Annual Meeting.

Thanks to Betty Hoffmeister, Dan Nichols, Butch Cannard, Steve Bryce, Art Wallace, Jerry Lucas and one or two others, the initial invitations to the Eastern Steam Car Tour June 17-22 went in the mail at the end of last week. Bob Reilly had prepared the material and the mailing list of 193 names. Positive respondents will be asked to send \$5 to FAHP for further mailings and details. A committee will be formed and become very active soon after Bob's return on February 3 to plan and work on all details for the operation of this tour.

Our paid-up membership stands at 152, and our annual appeal brought in just over \$50,000 since October 15, 2006. Bill Schwoebel is

to have his back operation on Wednesday, January 10, at Bryn Mawr Hospital, and all of us wish him well. I know he will appreciate a card at 22 Ralston Avenue, Havertown, PA 19083. THANK YOU, ONE AND ALL! Tom