



THE SIGNAL BRIDGE

NEWSLETTER OF THE MOUNTAIN EMPIRE MODEL RAILROADERS CLUB
MAY 2014 - MEMBERS EDITION

Volume 21 - Number 5A

Published for the Education and Information of Its Membership

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LOCATION

ETSU Campus
George L. Carter
Railroad Museum

HOURS

Business Meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of each month. Meetings start at 6:30 PM in:

Brown Hall
Room 312
ETSU Campus,
Johnson City, TN.

Open House for viewing every Saturday from 10:00 am until 3:00 pm.

Work Nights are held each Thursday from 5:00 pm until ??

UNION PACIFIC #8620 VISITS KINGSPORT TN









Photos by Paul Haynes – Issue provided at Todd Eton's Request



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CHICAGO CELEBRATES A MILESTONE THE SKOKIE SWIFT MARKS 50 YEARS OF COMMUTER SERVICE

Skokie Swift
Fifty years of service: 1964-2014

"The Commuter's Friend"
for Fifty Years and Counting

On Saturday, April 18, 1964, the dedication ceremonies for CTA's newest rail route – the Skokie Swift – were about to get underway. Following the ribbon-cutting, free demonstration rides were given for the 3,100 people who turned out for the event.
– Photo courtesy of the Krambles-Peterson Archive

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT
CTA

cta

Skokie Swift

Fifty years of service: 1964-2014



"The Commuter's Friend" for Fifty Years and Counting

Ms. Gladys Petrie of Chicago was honored at 10:04am, August 24, 1964, as the 500,000th rider of the new Skokie Swift service. Here, Skokie Mayor Myron Greisdorf and CTA Chairman George DeMent present her with a certificate of recognition. Ms. Petrie was a daily commuter on the Swift to her job at Avon Products in Morton Grove – an example of what is now referred to as "reverse commuting" (i.e. away from the city in the morning and back in the evening). Promotional events like this were common as CTA tried to market the Swift and keep its visibility high. – CTA photo





The Chicago Transit Authority has commemorated important historical anniversaries and other rapid transit milestones in the past, so I intuitively figured that CTA would sponsor some sort of event to recognize the 50th Anniversary of what is now called the Yellow Line. At least one week before the event, it was rumored that historic "brown & orange" cars 4271-72 would come out of mothballs. These vintage cars have rarely been used in recent years, but a CTA press release made this official a few days later. The rail enthusiast community was kept informed through postings on the [CERA Blog](#) and elsewhere.



Saturday dawned unseasonably chilly, but the sun illuminated an ethereal blue sky. Only later was I informed that crews had worked feverishly to restore Skokie service after a drunk drove onto the tracks earlier that morning.

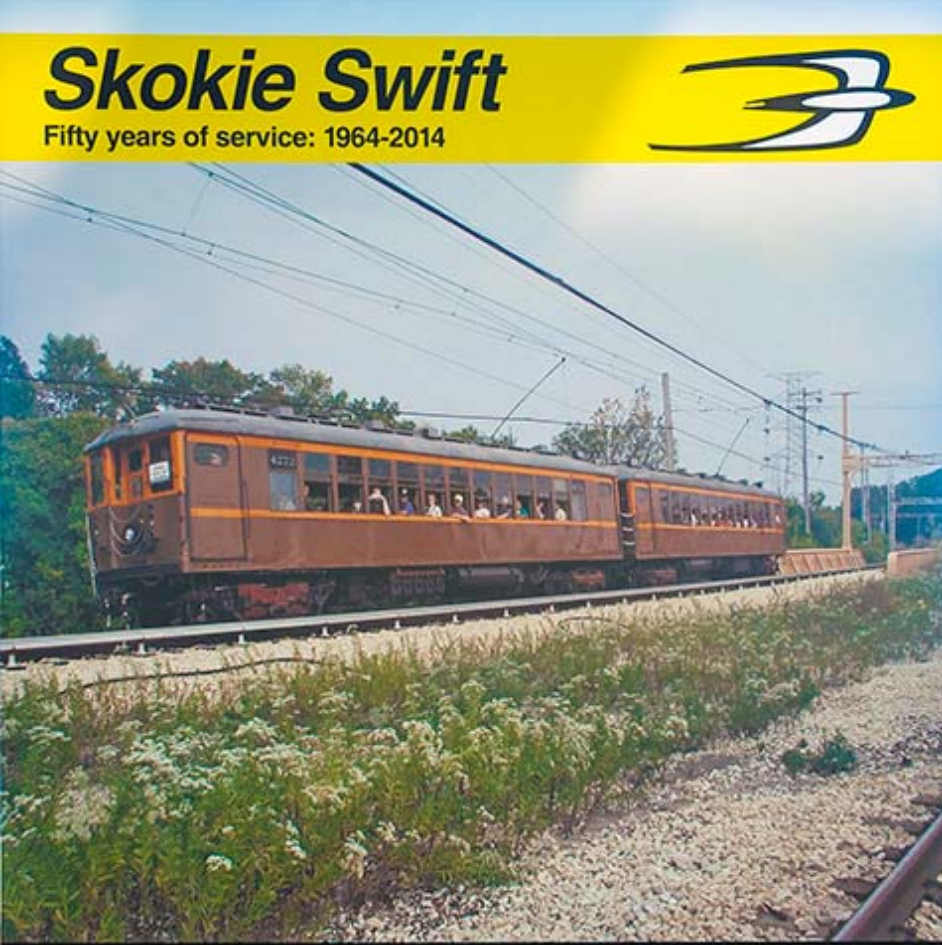


Commemorative posters were displayed in the station at Oakton, which opened just two years ago. At 11:00, a crowd assembled outside the Searle Ave. entrance to the Oakton station for a brief ceremony where CTA and Village of Skokie officials were present. In the attached photos, that's Graham Garfield sporting the vintage CTA uniform. Wearing the brown jacket is Bruce Anderson, who piloted the first Skokie Swift train 50 years ago!



The 90-year-old rapid transit cars made 4 round trips carrying revenue passengers between Dempster and Howard. The sights, sounds and smells were wonderfully nostalgic. I was fortunate to squeeze onto the first trip but then had to leave for a prior commitment. Running into


people who I hadn't seen in ages further limited my photo opportunities (sorry, no *Electropickle Productions* this trip, but you'll find others' video coverage on [YouTube](#)).



Skokie Swift
Fifty years of service: 1964-2014

"The Commuter's Friend"
for Fifty Years and Counting

As CTA prepares to de-energize the overhead catenary wire and convert the Yellow Line to third rail power, a special charter trip was organized by the Central Electric Railfans' Association for a "Last Trip Under the Wire," using CTA's special 1923-built Historic Cars, 4271-4272. The train rounds the curve at Oakton on September 5, 2004.
— Graham Garfield photo



Historic Norfolk & Western and Modern Norfolk Southern Heritage Trains Return to ETSU Carter Railroad Museum on April 26

Popular university train display and museum Heritage Day program series features regional favorite

Once again, big steam and mighty diesels will be on display at the George L. Carter Railroad Museum located in the Campus Center Building of East Tennessee State University in Johnson City. This event, "Norfolk & Western, Then & Now" will be focusing on the well-known Roanoke, Va.-based company now known as Norfolk Southern, reaching into the past as well as the present. Several unique events will happen on that day to help celebrate one of the most important railroads in the United States.

The reason for adjoining past with present on April 26 is the fact that, back in 2012, the railroad devoted a group of new locomotives to its own corporate past. These engines were painted in historically-derived schemes similar to the ones featured on their predecessor lines, like the Interstate, Nickel Plate, Wabash, and Central of Georgia. As a result, trains running on this day will include steam engines from the past, when the N&W was the sole major US railroad still using them, and Heritage painted modern diesels.

"This will be one of our highlight events for 2014, as there is so much variety between the two eras we are focusing on," says Geoff Stunkard, the museum's Heritage Days coordinator. "The colorful new engines have been seen here on the NS mainline through town, and are actively pursued by rail photographers. We truly hope to have an outstanding group representing them, as well as steam power from yesterday in operation."

From electrified operations to articulated locomotives, from 19th century struggles to streamlined steam designs, the N&W was respected by its employees and its fans on both Wall Street and Main Street. Operating from the deepest coal

regions of the Appalachian chain to Virginia's tidewater ports and into the Midwest via the Ohio River Valley and Columbus, Ohio, the N&W made no excuses and simply worked to get the job done. While virtually every other railroad its size converted to diesels, the N&W legendary steam program allowed it to stay the course until the very end of the 1950s, after which it began a series of acquisitions that made it a truly large eastern carrier. It combined with the Southern Railway to become one of today's 'super systems' in American railroading.

The Carter Railroad Museum is open on Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, and includes model railroad layouts, a special child's activity room, and ongoing programs. There is no admission fee but donations are welcome for its upkeep. The museum is also seeking artifacts for display, including the newest addition dedicated to the long-defunct, but well-remembered 'Tweetsie' line, the East Tennessee & Western North Carolina Railroad; this room, still under construction, again will be open for guided tours during event days.

In addition to the displays, there is also a growing research library, the National Railway Historical Society chapter, membership opportunities, and an oral history archive being established as part of the museum's programs. Info can be found online at

<http://etsu>

or

<http://johnsonsddepot.com/glcarter/cartermuseum.htm>

The Mountain Empire Model Railroaders (MEMRR) works in conjunction with the museum to demonstrate and maintain the model layouts, museum exhibits and other projects. More info can be found at <http://www.memrr.org>. Membership opportunities are available to adults, and include special benefits and model railroading enjoyment.

The George L. Carter Railroad Museum is located on the campus of East Tennessee State University, Campus Center Building, 176 Ross Drive. The entrance door is adjacent to the flashing RR crossbuck; for more information contact the Museum Director, Dr. Fred Alsop, at telephone 423/439-6838 or by email at alsopf@mail.etsu.edu.

21st Century Trains will highball into May's Carter Railroad Museum's Heritage Day

*May 31 finds modern railroading's powerful trains
showcased at popular free ETSU attraction*

The George L. Carter Railroad Museum located in the Campus Center Building of East Tennessee State University will leave the past behind as today's railroading takes over

on May 31. This year's 'Here to Stay' will feature modern trains and equipment representing the large North American railroad systems and equipment that are currently operating, including Amtrak and local lines CSX and Norfolk Southern.

While North America once featured numerous railroad companies, technological development and economic realities have created a handful of 'super railroads' that now handle a majority of the nation's rail service. Increased horsepower coupled to responsible environmental changes have made today's trains some of the most impressive in history. The various freight cars used today have remarkably more capacity than anything from the past, while passenger travel is returning to the forefront as well. Members from both the Mountain Empire Model Railroaders club and the George L. Carter Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society will be on hand to assist in this display day.

"The George L. Carter Railroad Museum's historical focus is primary to our mission, but we use this annual May program to showcase what modern railroading looks like to our visitors," says Geoff Stunkard, the coordinator of the museum's Heritage Days program. "National Train Day is in early May, so we like to focus May's Heritage Day event on the current era. Our younger visitors and club members really identify with these displays."

Model trains representing this equipment will be operating on the MEMRR club's large 24x44 1:87 HO scale layout that is housed in the museum. On display will be information on modern lines and Operation Lifesaver, along with publicity photos from Norfolk Southern's Heritage Unit program. The Carter Railroad Museum is open on Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, and includes model railroad layouts, a special child's activity room, and ongoing programs. There is no admission fee but donations are welcome for its upkeep. The museum is also seeking artifacts for display, including the newest addition dedicated to the long-defunct, but well-remembered 'Tweetsie' line, the East Tennessee & Western North Carolina Railroad; this room, still under construction, again will be open for guided tours during event days.

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GEORGE L. CARTER RAILROAD HERITAGE DAYS SERIES EVENTS FOR 2014

May 31: Modern Railroads: Power in the 21st Century
June 27-29: ET&WNC RR Historical Society National Convention, Carnegie Hotel
June 28: Song of the South: Southern Railway Heritage
July 26: Big Power & Black Diamonds of Appalachia
August 30: Prairie Fires and Mountain Peaks: The West Side of the Mississippi
September 27: Thunder in the Timber: 120 Years of Logging Heritage
October 25: George L Carter's Fabulous Clinchfield Lines
November 15: Homecoming at Carter's Place - 7th Anniversary (debut of Walker rail china collection for the first time ever in public)
November 29: Varnish & Chrome: When Beauty Rolled the Rails on Passenger Trains
December 20: Dixie Rail Extravaganza

THE VIEW FROM THE ENGINEER'S SIDE OF THE CAB.

Spring seems finally to have arrived with some summer-like weather, lots of flowers, the greening of the fields and forests

of East Tennessee from valley to mountains, and the beginning of grass cutting! We have two new members who joined us on Saturday, 10 May, to welcome to the Mountain Empire Model Railroad Club, **Alex Williams** a high school student from here in Johnson City who has been a frequent visitor to the Carter Railroad Museum and is really into the hobby; and **David Wiley** who is a resident of Burnsville, NC

and will be coming across the mountains on I-26 to join us for our activities when he can, but not so often when the snow starts falling. Guys, we are happy to have you in our model railroad club and at the railroad museum and we look forward to sharing our mutual hobby interests.

I want to thank the MEMRR and the G.L. Carter Chapter NRHS for moving their April business meetings back a week so we could host friends of **Jim Pahriss'** for a special evening program. German-born **Anton Seckler** and his wife presented an educational railroading program on the German railroad system including some of their modern high-speed bullet trains. Model railroads were shown as well including the great super layout in Hamburg. Their slides and videos were well done and Anton was a most entertaining speaker who answered many questions from the 20+ members who attended the meeting. The Secklers lead fully guided tours through Europe and you can get detailed information on their website www.modeltraintravel.com

The Carter Chapter NRHS sold out their May 24th rail excursion to Knoxville to ride the 3 Rivers Rambler Railroad, tour their backshops and facilities, ride the Tennessee Riverboat and have lunch on board. Not only did the requests for tickets come with a rush in late April and early May, but with such demand that the chapter had to add a third bus and limit the group of adventurers to 160 as that was all the train could hold! The chapter still had a waiting list and had to disappoint some folks by returning their money. Plans are already forming for another rail excursion in the fall. I wish to thank you for your support of our sister chapter's endeavor to provide some railroad experience to our region's citizens by being one of their passengers and by telling your friends about the trip. We know we live in a region with a great railroading history and that there is a lot of railroading interest as we see it in the many visitors who come to the Carter Railroad Museum, the steady increase of new members to the MEMRR and the number of folks who like to ride trains, especially behind a steam engine, when given the opportunity to do so.

This is the season for events that include travel and the out-of-doors. Lots of local happenings that will be of railroading interest to our members are beginning to line up and some of them will be events that we will be participating in and that will be successful only if you pitch in and help. In chronological order they are:

Rail Excursion on 3 Rivers Rambler RR & Tennessee Riverboat tour, May 24th, **SOLD OUT!** If you did not get your tickets you will only experience this adventure through others who went and are talking about it.

Blue Plum Festival: June 6-8th Johnson City, TN . We participate in this festival annually and we need to get the Cope Traveling Layout ready to show and have some volunteers who will transport it to-and-from and man it in the Hands-on Museum. We will discuss plans for this event at the May business meeting.

Jonesborough Days: July 4-6th, Jonesborough, TN. We participate in this annually and we need to get the Cope Traveling Layout ready to show and have some volunteers who will transport it to-and-from and man it in the Story Telling Center.

Birthday Parties: We have one booked for June 7th and another possible booking in June as well and will need some help for the girls getting the "party room" set up for these special Saturday events. **E**

T&WNC RR Historical Society's 26th Annual Convention: June 27-29th, Co-Hosted by the George L. Carter RR Museum. Headquartered at the Carnegie Hotel, Johnson City, TN this will be a great event that you should make plans to be a part of. Society members will be coming to the Carter RR Museum on Saturday, 28th, to visit and to see our progress on the Tweetsie HOn3 layout. We need to have some trains running that day and we need the electricians in our membership to make that happen. We also need to have some rolling stock assembled if any members want to put some of the 40+ kits we have together. They will be pulled by 2-8-0 locomotives ET&WNC RR #5 and #6. Their society's newsletter detailing the convention should be available on our website.

NRHS Fall Convention: November 13-16th, the national officers, Board of Directors, and many NRHS members are coming to Johnson City, TN and will be headquartered in the Carnegie Hotel and co-hosted by the George L. Carter Chapter NRHS and the George L. Carter Railroad Museum. There are 3 days of events for members and you might consider joining and participating in this national event.

I have 5,000 rack cards newly printed that promote the MEMRR, the Carter Chapter NRHS and the Carter RR Museum that can be distributed at these local events. A special thanks to **Geoff Stunkard** who created the cards for printing for us. Take some with you for distribution.

Members of the Middle Tennessee Model Railroads Club, led by **Jim Murchison**, visited the Carter Railroad Museum on Saturday, April 26th. The club is relatively new and located in Cookeville, the home of Tennessee Technical State University, and they are particularly interested in learning all they can about our arrangement with ETSU and our history

as a model railroad club. The group of 4 spent several hours touring the museum, talking with MEMRR and Carter Chapter NRHS members, and more than an hour discussing their interests in trying to establish a similar bond between their club and Tenn. Tech. with me. When we stop to think about the changes in our club over the 7+ years that we have been in the Carter Railroad Museum on the ETSU campus we know how very fortunate we have been as model railroaders. The university provides us a great place to practice our hobby, and we meet lots of interesting people who come to see our exhibits and learn more about model railroading and the prototypes our hobby is based on. Some become club members. In turn, we have created a very popular museum that is publically visible across the entire region and that brings positive recognition to ourselves and to the university. It has, and is, a very good relationship for our clubs and for the university. Being recognized by the *Johnson City Press* recently as one of the “Five Coolest Places to Visit in the Tri-Cities Region” is true recognition of what your efforts have done to bring the MEMRR and the Carter Railroad Museum to the forefront. Great work by an outstanding club made up of tremendous people!

Our members working almost daily for months on the Tupelo Honey Café N-Scale layout are in the finishing stages of creating an outstanding layout that features much of Johnson City in the late 1940s-early 1950s era. Because of the constraints of the configuration of the layout they had to use a lot of creative ingenuity and some “artistic license” in their rendition of this part of our city, but you will not only recognize many local landmarks, but also see a wonderful model train layout that is complex in its track layout, its train operation, and its detail. While a number of our members have been involved in creating this model railroad, the two major contributors have been **Larry Jackson**, who is an electrical genius responsible for all the flashing lights, synchronous movements of locomotives and trolleys, structure lighting, and making the little world go from daylight to dark in 12 minutes, and **Bear Anderson** who has built most of the structures, weathered them, populated the town, added many surprises to seek, find and excite onlookers, and has scened the entire 3 x16 foot layout. They have not created this little world by themselves, they had some very dedicated help, but they have done the lion’s share of the task that was set before them. Very soon thousands of people enjoying the food and drink that Tupelo Honey Café will be serving in the restored Clinchfield Railroad Depot on State of Franklin will be admiring the work of some of our club members in a great new restaurant. Very well done one-and-all! Plan to be at the May meeting as **Bear Anderson** is presenting the program and you may get a sneak peek at this layout and how it was created in photos

if he decides to depart from his scheduled “Weathering Structures” topic as previously announced.

Our Heritage Day Coordinator, **Geoff Stunkard**, has us joining the May celebration of National Railroad Day with “**Modern Railroads**” as our museum Heritage Day for May 31st. Get out your Amtrak units, your intermodal consists, and your bethgons and your NS Heritage units, or their equivalents, and bring them down to the museum to show fellow members and our visitors what railroading is like in the first quarter of the 21st century. The block lights are all green! Get rolling!!

One note on **Spring Cleaning**. We are getting more and more visitors annually, and on some Saturdays we have a 100 or more; on some Saturdays, not so many. We also are asked to have special tours of the museum including two in May, one by guests of the ETSU President, Brian Noland, and one by the First Lady of ETSU, Donna Noland. Sometimes we forget we are operating in a public place and we need to keep it clean. We are currently not getting much help from ETSU custodial service.

When **Cathy Cardy** was our custodian she kept us neat and clean including sweeping, mopping and buffing floors in the galleries as well as the hallways. She took pride in her work and in us as her friends and her charges. Cathy has gone to a day shift and to another building. Currently, we are not getting that kind of service and we are only getting trash cans emptied. We need to take some time to do more cleaning of our rooms as it seems no one else is going to do it for us. We need to occasionally dust our exhibits, window sills, blinds, clean glass, whatever; and to occasionally run a vacuum cleaner over the floors, particularly along the edges where the dust balls seem to gather, and to be sure the skirts under the layouts are pulled up and secured, etc., etc. Our visitors see our exhibits and they are amazed at the operating layouts, and at your skills in modeling and your knowledge of trains and of our hobby; but they also see dirt and dust and the hanging skirts and the unstraightened pictures on the walls, the little things we don’t notice may be leaving an impression we don’t want to have. I will see if I can get maintenance to pick up the drill and give us a little more help in this department, but I am asking your help in doing those little things that will make us look every bit as professional and smart as we are. Many will judge us by more than what do with our hobby; by what we do with the facility that we call our club’s home.

Spring is here. Our club is an exciting one to be a part of and if you have been reading all the above you may be feeling a little tired by all the things we have before us in the next few months, but the challenges are part of the reason we love

this hobby and a way to share it with ourselves and with those who come to see the marvelous things this club does with model trains, our modeling skills, and our passion for the hobby that thrills to the sound of a whistle in any scale. We are a club on the move and many visitors are coming to our museum over the spring and summer. It's going to be a lot of work and a lot of fun. Come be a part of it. As a member of a club that is 100+ members strong with lots of diversity and lots of talent. Come run your trains or the club's trains on Saturday and come join us for a work night every Thursday evening beginning around 4:40 p.m. The university's spring semester ended with graduation on May

10th and parking will be easy now until late August. We have lots of projects underway; some big and some small, but all are things you can get involved in and we could use your talents, your expertise and your comradeship. I am looking forward to seeing you at a club meeting or at the museum sometime soon. ***Here the sound of the whistle of the train in the night and dream of all the destinations yet to come.***

Fred J. Alsop III
President, Mountain Empire Model Railroaders
Director, George L. Carter Railroad Museum, ETSU

MOUNTAIN EMPIRE MODEL RAILROADERS MEETING MINUTES April 22, 2014

President Fred Alsop called the meeting to order at 6:35 P.M. in room 312 Brown Hall, ETSU, with 20 members and two visitors present for a total of 22.

President Alsop called for the reading of the Secretary's report from the March meeting as published in *The Signal Bridge* with a motion being made to accept them by Hobie Hyder, Secretary, and a second by Jim Pahriss. The report was accepted.

In the absence of Ted Bleck-Doran, Newsletter Editor, President Alsop commended Ted for a continued good job with the publication of *The Signal Bridge*. This month's issue was 26 pages long and contained a part A and B.

Gary Emmert, Treasurer, reported that the club's finances were in good standing. John Edwards, Web-Master, said that things were pretty well caught up with the club's web page.

Vice President John Carter reported that a few modeling demonstrations and video's had been requested by the membership as future programs. The May program will be on "Weathering Structures" and will be presented by Bear Anderson.

President Alsop reported that the museum continues to see a lot of visitors on Saturday. He stated that over the last couple of Saturdays that the museum had over 100 visitors each day. He also stated that a recent *Johnson City Press* publication named *The George L. Carter Railroad Museum* as one of the five coolest places in the Tri-Cities region to visit and praised the membership for their part in making this happen. President Alsop concluded his report by stating

that the Spring Fling was a huge success and talk was already going around about having a similar event in the Fall; perhaps an Octoberfest.

The business meeting was suspended so that special guest Anton & Meena Seckler could present their European and Model Train Travel program to the membership. Anton and Meena were introduced by Jim Pahriss. At the conclusion of this special program, door prizes were awarded by the Secklers. For more information about train trips that the Seckler's offer, you can visit their website at www.modeltraintravel.com.

Following the special program, an abbreviated business meeting was held. President Alsop reminded the membership that the next Railroad Heritage Day will be on Saturday, April 26th. The theme will be "N&W; Then and Now". He then called for Volunteers for Saturday operating sessions.

Old Business

President Alsop reminded the membership of the need to do their best to keep things clean around the museum. He asked that members 'please' keep the layout's skirts up and he reminded module owners to do periodic maintenance on their modules.

President Alsop reported that everything on the Tupelo Honey N-Scale project needed to be completed by May 15th and that the Tupelo Honey opening has been pushed back to the middle of June. President Alsop reported to the membership that the HO-Scale layout was now under radio control and that there were several club purchased radios available for use during Saturday operating sessions.

President Alsop continued the 'Old Business' by telling the membership that he had plenty of special pins, patches and 'Tweetsie' shirts available for sale. Cost of the pins and

patches are \$5.00 each while the shirts are \$25. If you would like your name on the shirt, there will be an additional \$4.50 cost. President Alsop concluded the 'Old Business' by telling the membership that a new DCC friendly turntable has been purchased for the HO-Scale layout and will be available for installation soon.

New Business

President Alsop reported that Jim Murchison and a group from the Middle Tennessee Model Railroaders will visit the museum on April 26th. They are interested in learning how our model railroad established a museum at ETSU. Their group hopes to duplicate our efforts at Tennessee Tech University.

President Alsop continued by reminding the membership of the upcoming Rail/Boat excursion May 24th. Tickets are just \$90 with May 12th being the cut-off date.

Gary Emmert, Liberian, announced that the library has some new DVD's available for check out by the membership.

John Edwards reported that he had purchased a decimal meter to try and determine an acceptable level for locomotives operating with sound during Saturday operating sessions. John stated that presently the volume is so loud that he, as well as others, are complaining of the noise and leaving with headaches. He also said that it was making radio usage difficult.

A motion to adjourn was made by Lanny Norris with Paul Haynes, seconding. The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 P.M.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, May 20th at 6:30 P.M. in room 312 at Brown Hall, ETSU.

Those who want to dine together will meet at 5:00 in ETSU's Market Place cafeteria, 3rd floor, Culp University Center.

*Respectively submitted,
Hobie Hyder, Secretary, MEMRR*

