

FOX RIVER LINES

m a g a z i n e



Issue 07-4, Winter 2007

Polar Express 2007 - Their Fun - Our Joy!

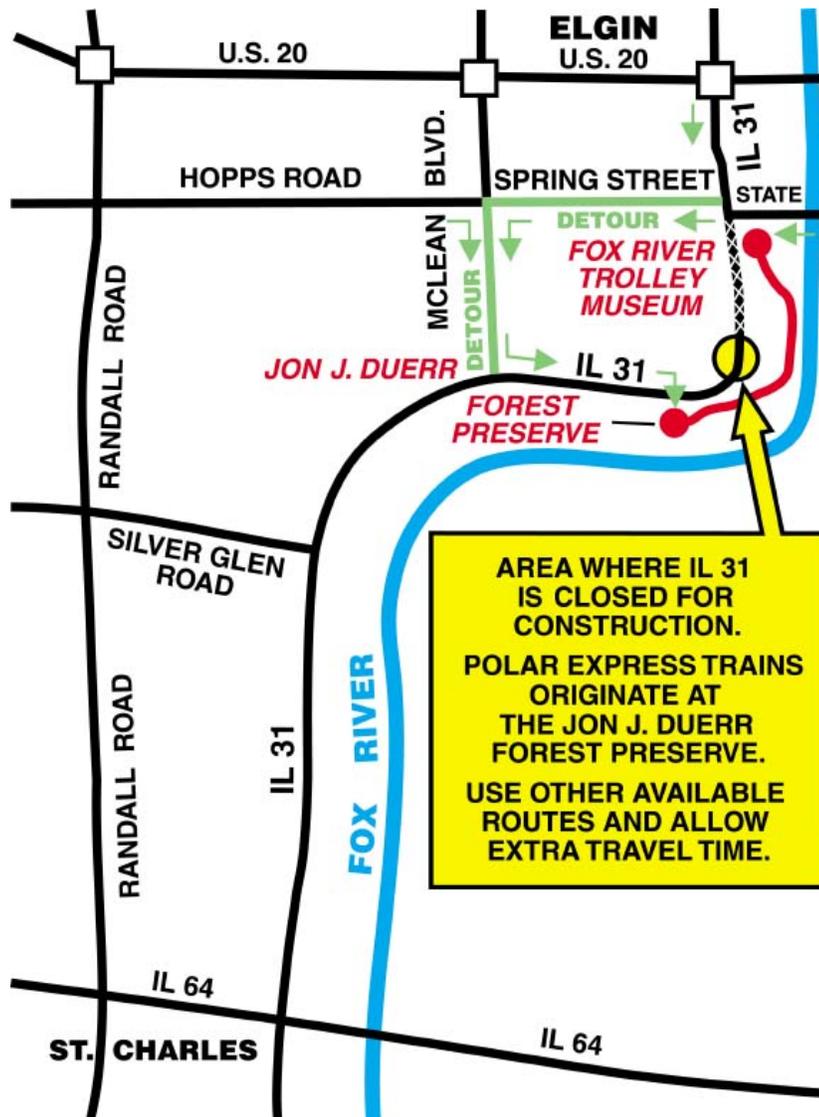


Routing signs placed by the Kane County Division of Transportation on IL Route 31 directing Polar Express guests to the event.

Fun by the ton was experienced by hundreds of parents and kids at "*POLAR EXPRESS - 2007*". It was a joyful experience for all of the Museum's members participating in the operating and servicing the 20 trains on the five days of operation last December. We are taking a different approach in telling the story of "*POLAR EXPRESS*" -2007. We hope through pictures to relate a different aspect of the operation the trains - the affect on our prized guests. This approach was made possible by the excellent photography of *Karen Naess*. She captured the "fun experience and excitement" of the season on the faces and demeanor of parents and children on their way to and from the North Pole and their meeting Santa.

In addition there were a number of non-members that contributed to the enormous success of the event. This year was different than previous

years. The season's operation in addition to being the largest we have undertaken was also faced with potential obstacles - the closing of Illinois Route 31 for bridge construction during a large part of our season including December. Through the cooperation and help of the Village of South Elgin's Village Administrator, Larry Jones, Carl Schoedel Kane County Division of Highways' Director and Dave Boesch, Chief Construction Engineer, electronic signage was strategically placed along Route 31 and other county roads as well as village streets guiding our visitors to the event. This was without a single reported problem or missed train.



Detour map and instructions to get to the Museum last fall.

A sleigh full of thanks and appreciation to all who helped fulfill the meaning of the season. There was *Bob Blaus*, (Event Coordinator) his story tellers, musicians, *Paul Kaufman*, and elves. Hot chocolate makers, *Bob Wayman* and *Fred Lonnes* - they added "warmth" to the occasion. Then there was the irrepressible *Ed Konecki* - who played Santa Claus to the hilt. *Ralph Taylor* and his great operations crew - *Bob Rodenkirk*, *Stan Nettis*, *Dan Kelly*, *Bill Minerly*, *Gene Jannece*, *Doug Rundell*, and *Dan Zedan* got the trains back and forth to the North Pole without a hitch or losing a reindeer. The Jon Duerr Parking Lot crew organized by *Chuck*

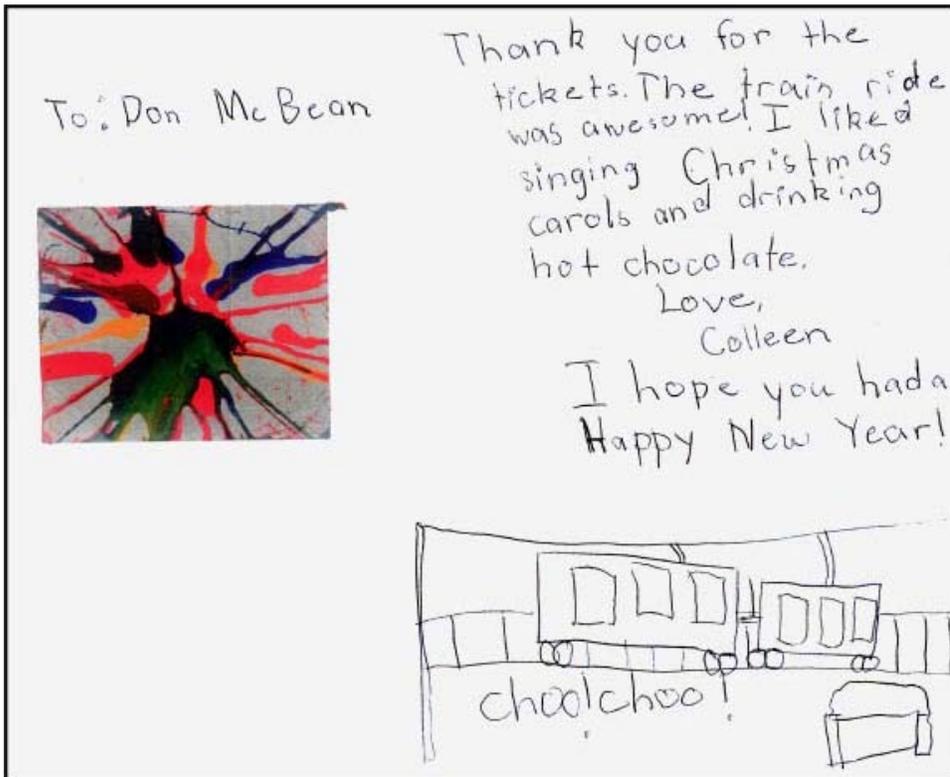
Galitz included *Bob Hillman, Art Lemke, Terry Younce, Luke Helm* and *Andy Roth*. They maneuvered the many cars in and out of Jon Duerr Forest Preserve flawlessly. A very special thanks also to Chuck Galitz for providing the power for and the beautiful shelter and platform lighting at Blackhawk Station and platform and the on board music system.

Don MacBean

The happy faces of guests and staff express their joy at being part of the Polar Express experience of 2007. Other pictures are of the "North Pole" (Castlemuir) and the "Polar Express" at Blackhawk Station.

Karen Naess photos





Colleen and Ryan picture and write their thanks to the Museum for the "Polar Express" experience.



View from the head end of the "Polar Express" as it passes the Tredup's.



Mission

To preserve and interpret Chicago's electric transport era that began in the 1890s and peaked before 1950. The electric transport era is significant because electric railways, including interurban, rapid transit, and streetcars, helped the Chicago region grow to be one of North America's great metropolitan areas. The Museum

strives to show that electric railways were more than convenient, they were and are a way of life for generations of people from all walks of life.

The Museum fulfills this mission by preserving, interpreting, and operating historic railway vehicles on its demonstration electric railway, over the Aurora, Elgin and Fox River Electric route at South Elgin, Illinois. Furthermore, the museum preserves, displays and interprets smaller artifacts, photos, oral histories, and documents which help relate the importance of electric transport in and around the Chicago Metropolitan Area, putting them in context with their surroundings and era.



I received a note the other day from a fairly new member. He wanted to know about programs and opportunities to volunteer at the Museum. This Member is roaring to go, and he wants to plunge in and contribute to the Museum's success. Unfortunately, I didn't have a good answer for him about volunteer programs other than that a good area to contribute his volunteer time is with the train crew Transportation Department, and with the track crew Maintenance of Way (MOW) Departments.

The Transportation Department has built a train crew volunteer program to assure consistency in training and to assure that the Museum professionally operates our demonstration train rides. The MOW Department has built a volunteer program to assure that the track receives continual care and maintenance. These two departments have made big steps to creating and building a volunteer program for their responsibility areas. And one of the most important steps is that:

- 1) The goals and projects of each department are clearly defined;
- 2) The Department Managers have created lines of communications to the Members that volunteer in their department.

However, many other Museum departments organize volunteer work in a completely different manner. Here, volunteer work tends to be casual and ad-hoc. With an ad-hoc volunteer program, a new volunteer must show

up at the Museum, and wander the grounds until he or she finds a Member who is working on something. Then, our new volunteer has to approach the working Member and ask if they can help. Hopefully, the working Member has something for the volunteer to do to help. But that may not be the case if it is a small, one-person project. Consequently, the volunteer either continues to wander around looking for a volunteer task, or the volunteer just gives up and goes home.

The Museum is not user friendly to new volunteers. However, before suggesting any changes (and there are many I could suggest), I want to write a few words on why the Museum relies on an ad-hoc volunteer system. Many of our newer Members may not realize that the Fox River Trolley Museum has been owned and operated by two very different organizations. Today's Museum, with 303 Members (06/01/2006), is the Fox River Trolley Museum (FRTM), a membership based Illinois Not For Profit Corporation. Yesterday's Museum, with 27 Members, was the Railway Equipment Leasing and Investment Company (RELIC) tightly held closed stock and also a membership based corporation. (organization.)

But, despite both being membership organizations; RELIC was a vastly different from FRTM. RELIC Members did not join the organization and pay annual dues. Instead, RELIC Members bought into the organization by the recommendation of current RELIC member through the purchase of stock shares. Because of the way people became RELIC members, it was a vastly smaller organization. How much smaller? My 1982 RELIC membership roster lists 21 Member stockholders and 6 Friends (non stockholders). There were only 27 people in the entire organization to operate and support the Museum! Now, if my memory serves me right, of those 27 people from 1982, 15 people were Active Members, over 55% of the total membership! During the Museums operating season, these Active Members would volunteer on average about 2 weekends a month. And a lot of Active Members were volunteering every weekend a month.

Now, a small organization, where everyone knows everyone else and where 55% of the Members are active volunteers runs a lot differently than larger organizations. In small volunteer organizations, most projects are done at an informal, word of mouth level. For example, in RELIC, with the exception of scheduling operators for our demonstration trolley rides, most projects were planned, and executed informally and through word of mouth communication between the volunteers. Most Active Members would be already out at the MUSEUM, and if you weren't super active, but wanted to volunteer, you showed up and wandered the grounds until you found a Member working on something and they needed help. Sounds familiar, it should as that is today's method of Museum volunteering!

RELIC was then what about today? Today, the membership of the Fox River Trolley Association is over 11 times larger than the membership of RELIC. In an ideal world, our Museum would have over 11 times more volunteers than in 1982. That would translate into over 166 Active Volunteers! Yet, it seems that we only have about 30 Active Volunteers. Membership grew 1100%, but Active Volunteers grew only 100%. Where are the rest of the Active Volunteers?

They are waiting for a Volunteer Program. They are waiting for a program:

- 1) Where the Museum takes seriously its role to teach volunteers the skills they need to volunteer at the Museum;
- 2) Where the Museum establishes a Volunteer Policy and Volunteer Guidelines to assist the volunteer to rapidly start contributing to the Museum Mission and Vision;
- 3) Where the Museums Managers concentrate more on leading, organizing, teaching, planning, and managing of volunteer projects, instead of actually taking on the actual work of the volunteer project;
- 4) Where the Museums Managers take advantage of the Volunteer management concepts of other railway preservation groups, such as the Friends of the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railway and applies them to the specific needs of our organization.

Creating a volunteer program will take an enormous amount of work and effort. But not only in creating the program, but in changing the Museums culture and outlook so that we do not behave as past relics, but embrace the dynamic future of creating service opportunities for volunteers.

I challenge the Museums Board and Managers to start thinking along these lines so that we can create and deliver a real volunteer program for the 2008 Membership year. I also challenge the Museum Membership to share their ideas with me, other Directors and Managers and other Members about what they want in a volunteer program. Please send me an Email or write a letter to me at the Museums address.

See you in South Elgin.

Edward Konecki

edwardkonecki@aol.com

L202 Donation Report -

We Are On Our Way - Ralph Taylor!

There is goooooood news concerning the L202 motor repair fund. We have received \$5740 or are over 33% of our way to the approximately \$17,000 needed to fund the project. This has been done in less than three months. The donations are greatly appreciated. *Ralph Taylor*, project coordinator, is eagerly awaiting more funds to come in to advance the project. He has begun marshalling forces including member volunteers to help in the undertaking. There is much preparation work and volunteers are needed to complete it before two motors are removed from each of L202's trucks. They will then be placed on the carrier's truck to be taken to Wisconsin for work. In addition, when the motors are returned and placed in the trucks more work will be required to restore L202 to operating condition. This will include reestablishing electrical connections and other effort, possibly a new pant job.

If you would like to volunteer, contact Ralph at 630-357-4653 or write him at 27W174 Bauer Road, Naperville, IL 60563 or e-mail him at Ltaylor500@aol.com. He is anxious to begin the work and wants to hear from you soon! Write, e-mail, or call Ralph to today! You are needed. If you can't work, the L202 fund still needs over \$11,000 to finish to job.

Let's go over the top before the next issue of "*Fox River Lines.*"

Don MacBean

Would You Believe

For purposes of this article, I am going to refer to the piece of equipment described herein as the "AAR Cart." The cart had a mixed parentage. The frame was constructed to accommodate a Track Department truck body owned by the Burlington Northern Railroad and included the tool cabinets. The cart was at its new home at the Association of American Railroad's (AAR) test facility at 31st and Federal in Chicago, on the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology, along the former Rock Island main line now part of METRA's Rock Island Service. It stored the tools that were used to maintain the tracks within this facility. The AAR utilized three buildings, two of which the AAR tested various components and materials used by railroads in their operations. So much for the history.

The AAR moved this facility from Chicago to Pueblo, CO where it was renamed Transportation Technology Center, Inc.

As a result a number of pieces of equipment became surplus and available. Thus the "AAR Cart" found its way to the museum along with other equipment. Over a period of years and evaluations it was decided that it could not be used the way it was. So the cabinets and other storage sections have been removed as seen in the accompanying pictures. The story is a real "torchy" one. It has not been as simple as a 20 minute Saturday afternoon job . . . rather taking many many Saturdays . . . But the job is nearing completion. Its future . . . a push car used by the track department for hauling heavy loads or the place to put our "EZdumper", used for ballast spreading. I guess we will have to just wait and see.

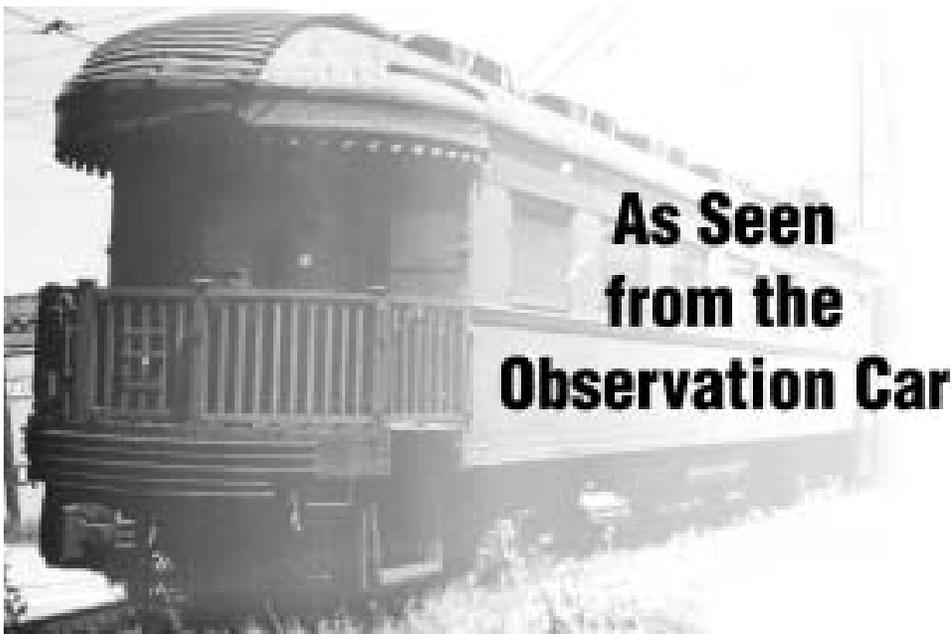
Don MacBean



Fred Lonnes, the cutting "surgeon" disassembling the AAR cart.



**Left: Making progress is slow and time consuming.
Right: Parts from the cart ready for the scrap pile.**



Me and My Stuff - Who Cares?

How much time do we (active members of the Fox River Trolley Museum) spend outside the Museum with those who are our biggest

constituency?

Webster defines constituency:- "the people involved in or served by an organization or business."

What/who is our biggest constituency?

Defined demographically they are families whose adults are in their 20's and 30's with children aged to eleven years old and live within 50 miles of South Elgin.

How do we know?

Thirteen years of revenue and traffic statistics show that our biggest events (Halloween Hiawatha, Pumpkin Trolley, "Polar Express") are our largest producers of dollars and visitors and are composed of this demographic group.

Are there contributions (results) from this demographic group and what are they?

Annually, they produce one half of our revenues and visitors and draw repeat visitors and revenue.

Are the contributions (results) beneficial?

Yes and no. Yes, to the extent they pay for the maintenance and operation of the Museum, and securing more members and visitors. No, to the extent that we rely on the same few people to creatively produce these events, no, to the extent they engender the attitude and the thought process that these events are the "exclusive property" of the few members involved in each of the events, no, to the extent we are willing to let "others" be creative and assume we do not have act creatively, no, to the extent that we do not reach out to and mix with and encourage participation of these constituents in the promotion and development of the Museum's mission. No to the extent we do not individually reach out and concern ourselves with and meet the constituency's needs, wants and desires, IT IS FATAL! We will not grow, the mission will not be fulfilled and the Museum will become a monument preserved as a failure.

To keep the Museum growing in terms of services, facilities and influence in the broader community it is imperative that we know, interact with, respond to and help our constituency.

Essentially it is all about "them" and not about us!

Don MacBean

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