



## ***From the President's Rider Car*** -- By President Frank Van Bree

### **Convention, discussion groups, Preserving archives**

This month's ramblings will start on a low note and work up to better news.

I am sad to report the passing of Stanley Barriger, the youngest son of President John Barriger. Stan was a personal friend and a fine fellow. He was in high school when the centennial celebration took place and participated in many of the events. He and his brother Jack entertained us with their recollections at the Annual Meeting of the Society in Hammond a few years ago. Rest in peace on that great railroad in the sky, old friend.

You all know, I hope, that the Society sponsors two internet discussion groups hosted by Indiana University. They are commonly referred to as Listservs. One is limited to discussions and the other is used for sending attachments such as pictures. The latter, referred to as the PicList, was established because some files (pictures etc) are so large that they take a long time to download and tie up space particularly for people with dial up modems. It is also limited to members of MRHTS because we found that some participants were copying shared photographs and selling them on Ebay and elsewhere. The discussion listserv is open to anyone who wants to discuss Monon issues and does not require membership in the Society.

The Listservs have not been monitored for content, so decency and good taste have been the only unwritten requirement. This worked well until recently and without major or lingering problems. Unfortunately a very few participants with strong opinions about the correctness of the positions they take about an item under discussion, have tried to turn the Listservs into a debating forum. They are evidently more interested in proving that they are right than contributing to the knowledge of the rest of us. In any event, their contentiousness has caused many participants to quit the discussion groups altogether or to stop contributing. Participation and discussion is way down. That's unfortunate, because we all benefited from the friendly exchange of information. I ask that you remember, it's not all about you, it's all about the Monon. By the time you read this the Directors may have taken measures to rein in these ego trips before the Listservs are destroyed completely. I hope that draconian measures are not necessary but you may be certain that I will do everything within my authority to correct this situation. I ask that those of you who have never joined the Listservs do so now and participate in the spirit and purpose for which they were created and those of you who left, to come back. Remember how much fun we used to have? Contact George Carpenter to join.

Moving along to brighter topics:

We now have more than 250 Sustaining members of the Society. That's more than half of you. A big THANK YOU. The

extra dues allow us to do more things to preserve the history of the Monon.

We have begun to digitize the paper archives so that in the event of fire or flood they will have been preserved in electronic media. This should also make research easier as the documents will be indexed by subject and location on the railroad. This is a huge project and will take some time and money to complete, but the process has started. As has been reported here previously the digitization of the photo archives began some time ago and is progressing very successfully, but by its very nature will never be completed as new photographs are collected and brought into the system. Already, it is amazing how fast we can locate an item of inquiry.

Our Treasurer, Joseph Novosel, tells me that he has completed the digitizing of the Society's financial records and procedures. This means that for the first time we have all financial data at our finger tips and a permanent digital record of every transaction both payable and receivable. We no longer have or use paper checks. It's taken Joseph a long time to get this far, but from now on, your checks should be processed more quickly and if we owe you money, you should get it more promptly. I certainly hope so. Our history of failure in this regard has been a constant source of personal embarrassment to me.

The plans for the Annual Convention, at Bloomington this year, are progressing nicely. The theme is the exploration of the Stone District, the source of many carloads of freight in the past. Bob Banks, a Trainman/Yardmaster who worked on the stone trains, will be the speaker at the annual banquet.

Tom Rankin, our Convention Chairman has planned a very special surprise for those who attend the banquet. You will really, really, really like this. Also, we are planning to dedicate the Employees Memorial located along the hiking/biking trail which follows the Monon right-of-way through downtown Bloomington. Ideally, construction will be far enough along to allow us to place it at the site of the passenger station. At this point we are not sure, but in any event you will be able to see the memorial. I request and encourage all former employees of the Monon and their families to attend.

Enclosed with this THL you will find the ballot for the election of Officers and Directors for the coming year. All of the current office holders have agreed to stand for reelection, but as of this writing, the period for nominations is still open and I am advised that there is at least one additional nominee for Director. There may be more nominated so be sure to look at the ballot and biography sheet and then vote. Most of you don't vote so I am always left wondering whether you believe we are doing such an outstanding job that you want no change or are of the opinion that it's a waste of time and postage and will make no difference anyway. So please take the time to vote.

See you in Bloomington.

73



**FRANK VAN BREE**